

SPLINTER CELL Wii • KORORINPA Wii • MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG 2 DS

Nintendo GAMER

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10 PAGE
GUIDE!

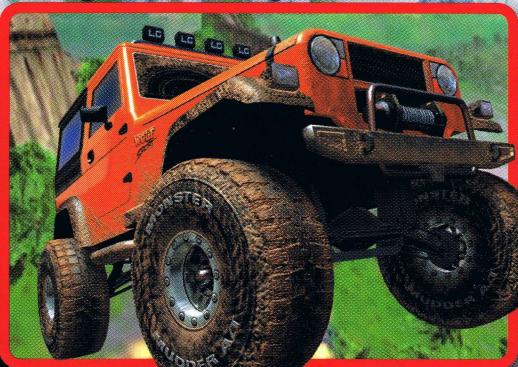
LEGEND OF

ZELDA

Save Hyrule with our huge
dungeon walkthrough!

EXCITE TRUCK Wii

Burning rubber, Wii-style



WII PREVIEW
POKÉMON
Pocket Monsters back
with a vengeance!

SPECTROBES DS

Could it give Pokémon a
run for its money?

SONIC Wii

Exclusive first look at
the SEGA star's Wii debut

CASTLEVANIA DS

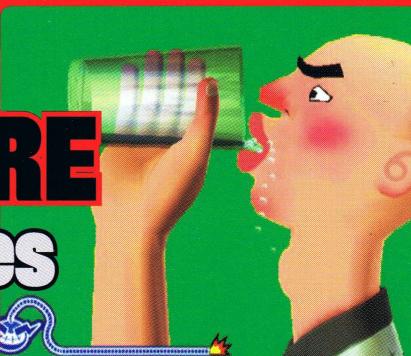
Gothic goodness



WII REVIEW

WARIO WARE Smooth Moves

The Wii's addictive new party game



A next MAGAZINE

02



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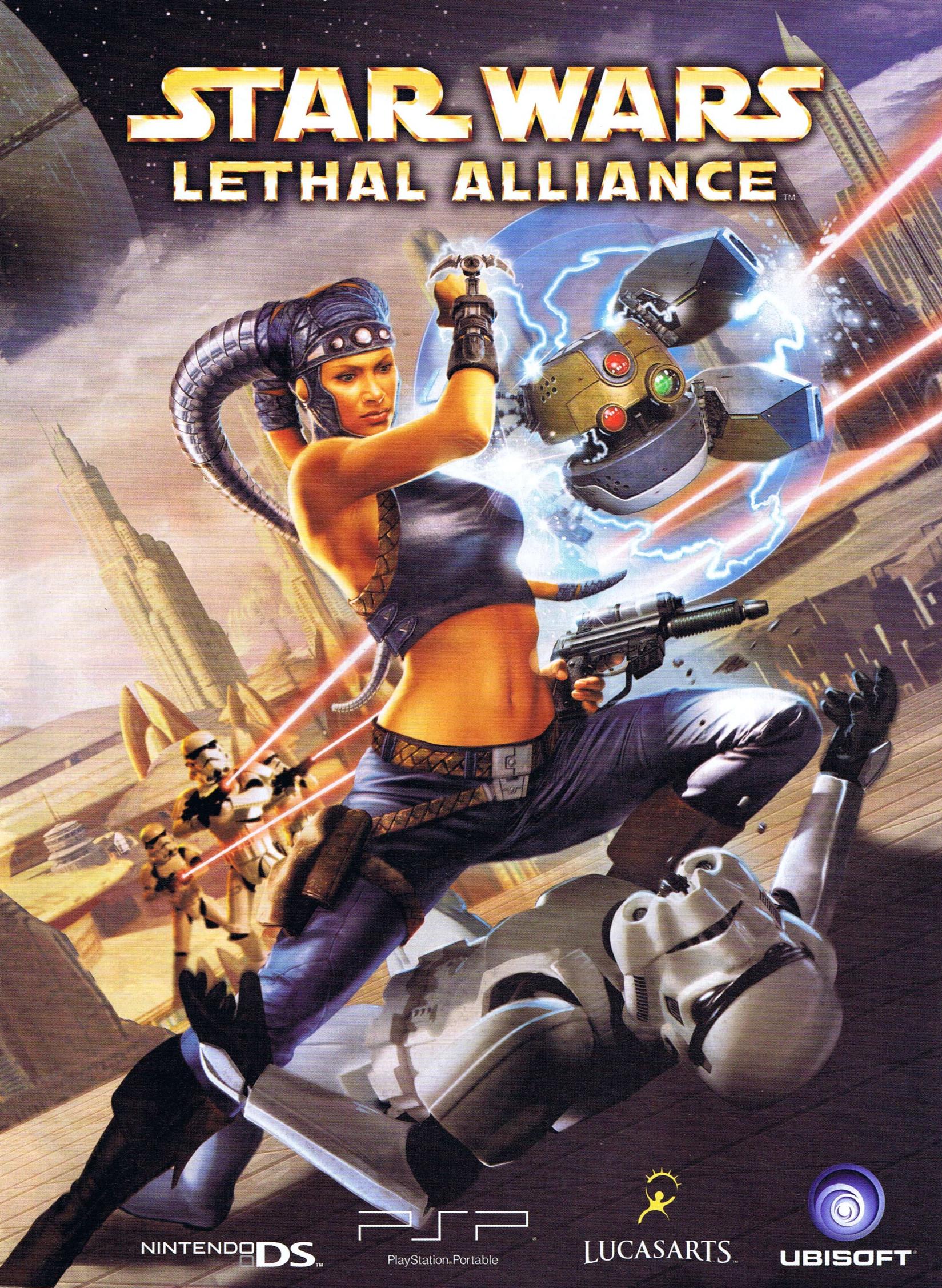
PG

Mild violence

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STAR WARS

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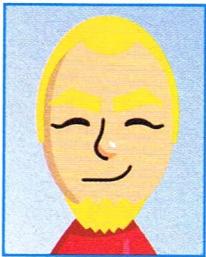
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Nintendo GAMER

EDITORIAL



Got wireless broadband yet?

If you do, the Wii – through its online service *WiiConnect24* – acts as a gateway to the rest of the world (on top of its regular fulltime gig as an absolutely ace games machine), offering email and picture exchange with other Wiis and PCs, a steadily growing library of retro Nintendo (and Sega) games, and access to internet browsing, news headlines and weather forecasts.

If you don't, should you be in a mad rush to get yourself connected? Even if you do already have broadband and simply need a LAN adapter (RRP\$39.95) or a Nintendo USB Wi-Fi dongle (RRP\$49.95) – both of which are the cheapest methods to hook the Wii up to the 'net – there's currently no compelling reason to hook up to *WiiConnect24*.

The news and weather forecast channels are already better delivered on your PC or Mac, as is mouse-controlled internet browsing. Email and photo exchange is also better suited to the freedom and versatility of home computers, leaving the only other interesting prospect the Virtual Console games available for purchase. Virtual Console is a great idea and a perfect complement to the innovative new titles coming to the Wii, however currently there's nothing we'd call essential. And why hurry with VC? These games will still be available for download in the years to come.

Content download (like extra characters or new presents in games like *Animal Crossing*) and online multiplayer enabled games are the killer applications needed to make *WiiConnect24* an essential service, and more importantly allow the Wii to live up to its promise.

These are coming. *Eledees*, which is due in April, will allow users to share in-game photos and custom levels. *Pokémon Battle Revolution*, due later this year (for more information turn to our feature starting on page 24), will allow gamers to battle each other over *WiiConnect24*. *Animal Crossing* will allow email and item exchange between players, as well as visits to other towns – but the game hasn't even officially been announced yet. There's even talk of original games being made available through the service. As it stands, *WiiConnect24* is a fantastic idea with plenty of potential – it's just disappointing that we haven't seen any more concrete details emerge.

So for now, sit back and enjoy the Wii for the great games machine that it is. If you haven't hooked up your Wii to the 'net yet, don't worry about it – you're not missing out on very much at the moment.

March

ISSUE 2

2007

EDITORIAL

Editor
March Stepnik | march@next.com.au

DEPUTY EDITOR

Daniel Staines | daniels@next.com.au

ART DIRECTOR

Sally Woellner | sallyw@next.com.au

ILLUSTRATOR

David McDermott | emotopia@gmail.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Anthony Corbett
Eleanor Eiffe
Gomes Chenbalin
Kosta Andreadis
Jonathon Ikeda
John Dewhurst
Patrick Alexander
Fiona Wildgoose
Anthony Hetrih
Charlotte Arthur
Erin Bowcock
Dylan Burns
Brendan Jenkins

ADVERTISING

Ashley Day
National Account Manager
Dir: 02 3699 0349
Fax: 02 9310 2012
ashleyd@next.com.au

PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATOR

Alison Begg
Ph: 02 9699 0333
Fax: 02 9699 0334

MANAGEMENT

Chief Executive
Phillip Keir

Finance Director
Theo Fatseas

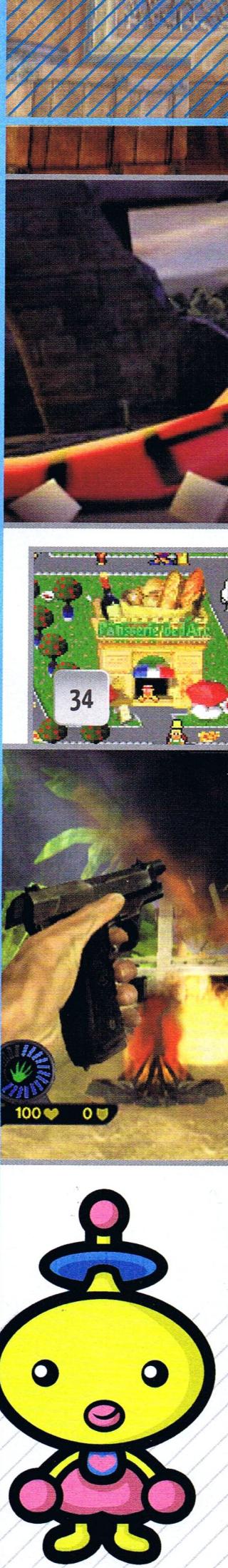
Operations Director
Melissa James
Melissa@next.com.au

Circulations Director
Bruna Rodwell

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Ph: 1300 361 146
FAX: 02 9699 0334
Email: subs@next.com.au

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ACN 002 647 645
ISSN 14454173
78 Renwick Street
Redfern, NSW 2016
Australia
Ph: 02 9699 0333
Fax: 02 9310 1315



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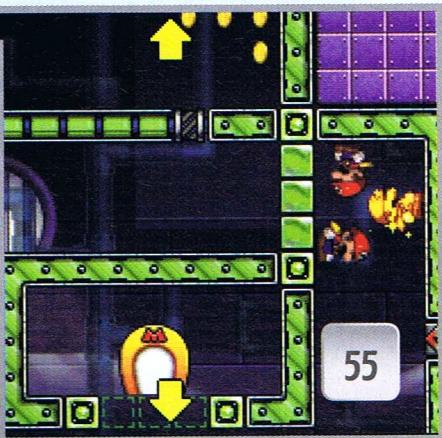
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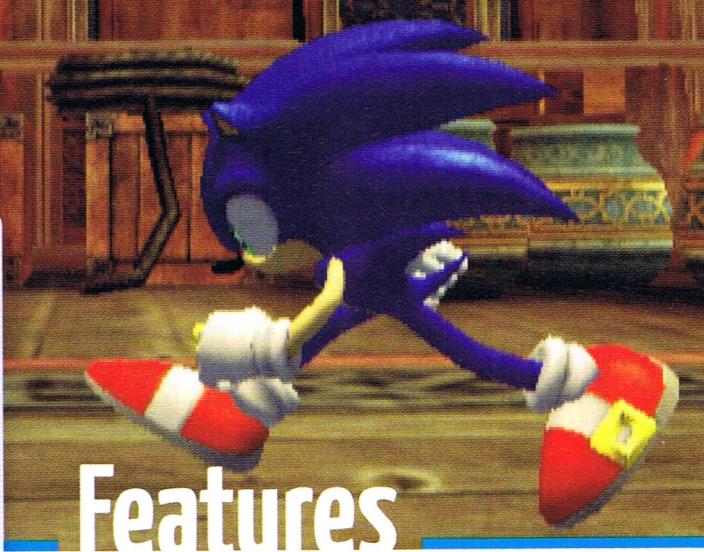


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iNews Channel

WII'S CHANNEL MENU EXPANDS

• Surf the web & browse news headlines

Nintendo released two major updates to the Wii's front-end channel menu, offering the Opera browser-based *Internet Channel* and *News Channel* services as free downloads to online-enabled Wiis.

Selecting the *Internet Channel* launches an Opera-powered web browser (Opera has also developed a web browser for the DS, called Nintendo DS Browser – see page 13 for more details), allowing users to visit websites and use web-based email. There are two main perspectives used by the browser, a more general "zoomed-out" perspective for general navigation and a "zoomed-in" view for actual reading. Favourite websites can be saved in a favourites list.

The Opera browser also uses two primary modes of input – a standard 'qwerty' virtual keyboard and an SMS-style virtual keypad. Both are controlled using the Wii remote as a pointer. A mobile phone-style predictive text dictionary features for both, allowing quick entry of commonly used names and details.

Currently, the *Internet Channel* offers only a trial version of the Opera internet browser, with a more complete version due sometime later this year. It will remain free for a undisclosed period of time following launch, after which it will be available for a small fee from the *Wii Shop*.

Meanwhile *The News Channel* serves as a complement to the *Internet Channel* in offering small news stories care of Associated Press across several categories: national/regional/international, sports, arts/entertainment, business, science/health, and technology.

Headlines for each piece are displayed, and a more in-depth article can be selected by pressing the A button on the Wii remote.

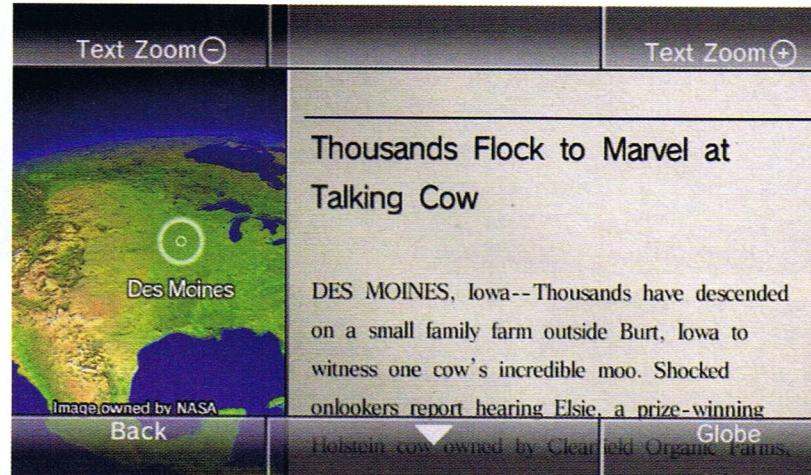
However it's the visual nature of the *News Channel* which gives it its charm. *News Channel* can be run as a slide show, offering a streaming glance at all the

headlines available by region – next to a dynamic globe showing the origin of the news.

Users can also spin the globe using the Wii remote (like they can in the *Weather Channel* to search for global details) to find news items by geographical location.

However, the question remains: just how useful are these two applications to Wii users? Desktop computer-based internet use is still the most superior way of using the Web, however Nintendo has shown such services can work on the living room TV – especially considering the intuitive nature of the Wii remote. And it might be perfect for those who want to browse the web after becoming glued to the couch after a long session of *Legend of Zelda Twilight Princess*.

The *Internet Channel* and the *News Channel* services join the *Weather Channel*, a service launched late December of 2006 allowing users to view local, national and international weather details on the Wii. ■



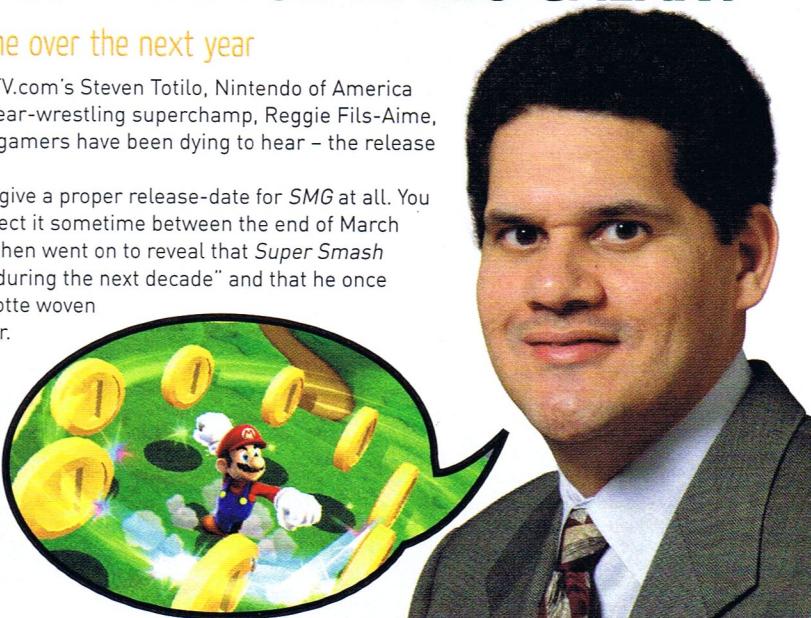
REGGIE REVEALS DATE FOR MARIO GALAXY

• Definitely maybe sometime over the next year

In an interview conducted with MTV.com's Steven Totilo, Nintendo of America president and world-renowned bear-wrestling superchamp, Reggie Fils-Aime, dropped some juicy info that Wii-gamers have been dying to hear – the release date of *Super Mario Galaxy*.

Ha ha ha. Just kidding. He didn't give a proper release-date for *SMG* at all. You know what he said? He said to "expect it sometime between the end of March and next Christmas." Honestly. He then went on to reveal that *Super Smash Bros. Brawl* "will be out sometime during the next decade" and that he once strangled a wild buffalo with a garrote woven out of his own iron-strong chest hair. Finally, the interview ended with Fils-Aime expressing his profound distaste for Microsoft's J. "Jiggy" Allard, who he described as "bald and weak, like an ugly middle-aged baby."

So there you go. That sure was some NEWS, wasn't it? ■



WII TO GET ELEDEES!

- Atari announces new Wii game



Hot off the press: Atari has announced a new title for Wii titled *Eledees* which will go on sale in April of this year. Developed by Japanese developer Konami, the press release claims *Eledees* "is an original catch and seek title that uses the Wii hardware's

unique control system to search for and capture the titular mischievous *Eledee* creatures."

Sounds great. Sounds like...well, it sounds a lot like *Elebits* (covered in *Nintendo Gamer* #1). In fact, wait a minute – it is *Elebits*! Way to go Atari for announcing a new

game when really, the only news here is that the game's getting a name change for the Aussie (and European) release, and that we're getting the game substantially later than the guys in the US and Japan did (where it was released in the launch window at the end of 2006).

Anyway, reports from Japanese and American players of the game are that it's great: we'll reserve judgement until we get our hands on it in the coming weeks. We'll have a review in the next issue or so! ■

TACTICS ADVANCE RETURNS!

- Final Fantasy Tactics, that is.



Final Fantasy Tactics Advance: an essential GBA strategy game.

Developer Square Enix has announced a follow-up to the one the GBA's most beloved fantasy strategy games, the brilliant *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance*, naming *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance 2: The Sealed Grimoire* as the next in the series.

Nothing is known about the title except that it's due later this year and that it's coming to the DS. Oh, we also know that it'll be related to Ivalice – the land in which the original was set – because *FF Tactics Advance 2* is actually one of three games making up the *Ivalice Alliance* series of *Final Fantasy* games coming out of

Square Enix this year. The others are a PSP remake of the original PS1 *Final Fantasy Tactics* (on which the *FFT* was based) and *Final Fantasy XII Revenant Wings* on DS – both of which were also set in Ivalice.

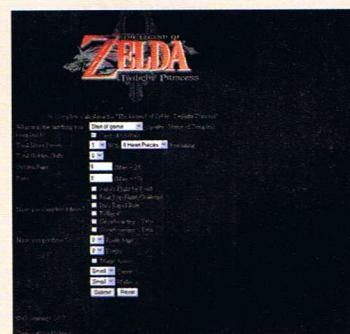
The only other hint we've got comes from the game's title, *The Sealed Grimoire*. In the first *FFT*, the game's protagonist Marche and his friends were whisked away to Ivalice after opening a magical tome...

Keep checking *Nintendo Gamer* for more on this exciting announcement in an upcoming issue. ■

Website of the Month: The Legend of Zelda Twilight Princess Calculator

www.twilight-calculator.us.tt

This one's only a single page, but for its handiness it gets our pick of website of the month. After filling in certain milestones reached in the game on this page (like number of heart containers gained, golden bugs found, for example), the page calculates just much of *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* you've actually finished. Particularly useful to those trying to nab 100% completion of the game.



HOW BLACK IS YOUR SOUL?

- Multi-coloured Wiis on the horizon

In a recent interview Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aimes responded to a question about the status of the availability of multicoloured Wiis in the future (various coloured Wiis were shown in press kits at the unveiling of the Wii – then codenamed Revolution) in a

typically coy manner. "Maybe that question will have more relevance once we've managed to meet the overwhelming worldwide demand for our current colour!" Fils-Aimes said.

While it's as non-committal as a response can be, insiders are hinting that we'll see at least two other colours of Wii by the year's end. ■



NINTENDO WII – GAMES CONSOLE OR SATAN'S SEX MACHINE?

- Idiot journalist says something stupid; laughter ensues



And this month's award for The Stupidest Article Written About Videogames by a Member of the Mainstream Press goes to "Game console can be porn gateway" – a shameless piece of sensationalist scare-mongering authored by Shelly Slater and posted on American current-affairs and news website, WFAA.com.

In the article, Slater argues that because consoles such as the Wii and PlayStation 3 are internet capable, they are therefore "compatible with sexually-oriented websites" and will thus inevitably tempt innocent children (!!!) to abandon videogames in favour of downloading hardcore pornography. "It's easy for kids to access porn," the story goes. "It's very upsetting something this popular – a kid game – can go that direction so quickly."

Of course, what the story fails to mention is that ANY device with internet functionality can be a "porn gateway". For instance, the computer Slater wrote her stupid article on? Nothing more than a sordid sleaze machine. And the

computers on which her work is stored? Porn-powered soul-destroyers. And – man! – don't get us started on mobile phones. If the back cover of a certain disreputable games mag is anything to go by, it would seem that the sole purpose of mobiles is to view filthy pornography. (And play annoying ringtones.)

Anyway, we could probably harp on this for a bit longer and point out some of the other stupid things Slater said in her desperate bid to stir up some controversy, but really – what's the point? If kids want to view pornography, there are much easier ways to do it than via the Wii. As for adults, well... they can do whatever they want. Just so long as they don't tell us about it. ■

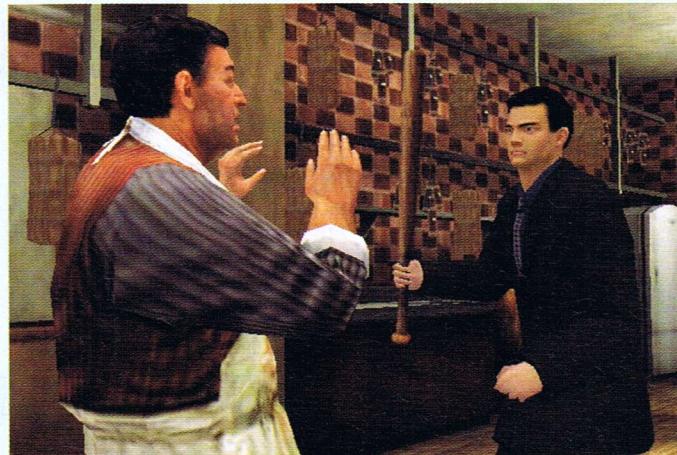


FIRST LOOK

The Godfather is Wii-bound

- Prepare to man-handle the Wii remote

Who said Nintendo was just for kids? EA has announced a Wii edition of their mobster film tie-in *The Godfather*, with some added content. Subtitled the *Blackhand Edition*, it's due very soon now and is best thought of as a director's edition of last year's action game with some extra content in to sweeten the deal. The most interesting of the extras is the Wii remote and nunchuk motion controls. Using these, you'll be able to make short work of your opponents using your fists, meaning you can take the boxing skills you learned in *Wii Sports* and put them into a bit more of a real world scenario (not that we're advocating violence or anything here). You'll also be able to man-handle your opponents, like being able to lift them up by the collars using the controls. We can't wait to play this one.



Dr. Kawishama's Kwik Kwiz



How much do YOU know about Nintendo?

1. Which individual is widely credited with the creation of Kirby?
2. True or False: Petey Piranha is a playable character in *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*
3. What is the best selling GameCube game of all time?
4. What is the subtitle for the GameCube remake of the original *Metal Gear Solid*?
5. By what codename was the N64 originally known?

Answers on p.80 – no, honestly this time.

WHOOPS!

In our last issue we said that the answers to the quiz were on page 81 – which obviously wasn't the case. Our apologies for mix-up. Here are the answers for your quiz-scoring pleasure:

1. Super Mario Land
2. True
3. Koji Kondo
4. Super Punch Out!!
5. Metroid Prime

WII DON'T LIKE CRICKET

• No, no. Wii love it.

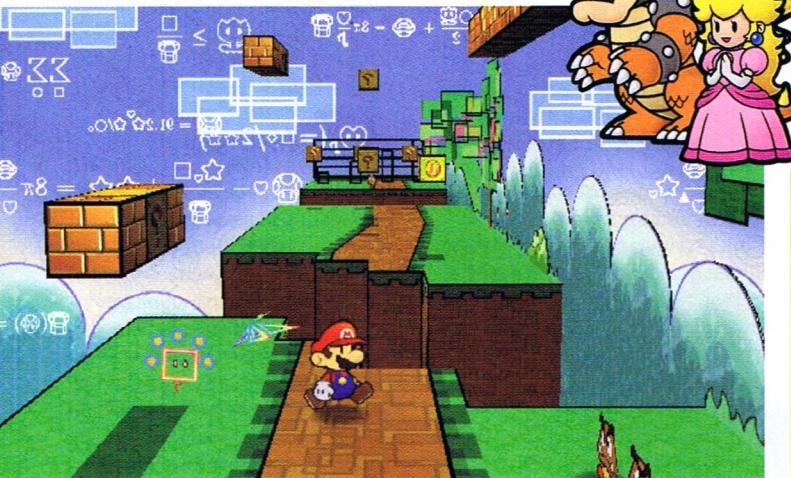
Wi Sports has obviously captured the imaginations of players worldwide with its revolutionary way of using real-life gestures to control the games of tennis, golf, bowling, boxing and baseball included.

But some Aussie gamers want more. Seeing the potential of a Wii-based cricket game, a new website has just been launched to serve

as a petition to give to Nintendo and EA (who have released cricket games in the past) to go ahead and get one made.

A cricket game on Wii does indeed sound like an exciting prospect, so if you believe in petitions or just want to find yourself amongst other cricket-loving gamers, head to wiiwantcricket.com now! ■

SUPER PAPER MARIO OUT IN APRIL



• For the US, that is. Who knows when it's coming out here.

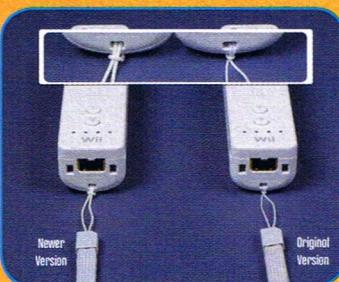
And that's pretty much the whole story right there. *Super Paper Mario*, a gorgeous-looking platform/RPG hybrid developed by Intelligent Systems, is scheduled to hit American shelves in April – a couple of months earlier than originally predicted. No word on an Australian release date yet, but we can't imagine it'd be much later than May or early June. But then, we haven't got *Pokémon Diamond* and *Pearl* yet, and they've been out in Japan for months. So, yeah – who knows.

Incidentally, in case you didn't

know, *SPM* is a Wii game now. It was originally intended for GameCube, but then Nintendo realised that it would probably make more money if it were released on a console people care about. So far as Wii-centric features go, we know that you'll be able to use the Wiimote to search the screen for hidden items, as well as spotlight enemies to gather information about their weaknesses and so forth. Also, wagging the Wiimote when Mario jumps on an enemy makes him deal more damage or something. SOUNDS EXCITING. ■

Hot & Not

HOT: The Wii's record-breaking Australian launch. 32,000 units sold in just four days! Over 50,000 units sold-to-date! What've you nay-sayers got to say now? Not "nay", that's for sure!



HOT: Nintendo caving into public-pressure and offering replacement Wiimote straps to anyone who wants them. It's always nice to see a corporation take responsibility for its mistakes.

HOT: The Virtual Console's ever-expanding library of retro radness. *Mario Kart 64* for 1,000 Wii-points? *Super Castlevania IV* for 800? Bargain!

NOT: The chronic shortage of Wises at retail. Nintendo clearly underestimated consumer demand for the console, and now it's next to impossible to find one. Bah.

NOT: Nintendo caving into public-pressure and offering replacement Wiimote straps to anyone who wants them. It's always annoying to see stupid people blame a product for their inability to use it properly.



NOT: The continuing uncertainty regarding the availability of NTSC titles on PAL VC. Will we get *Final Fantasy VI* and *Chrono Trigger*? Who knows!

FIGURE SKATING GAME COMES TO DS

• "Sweet!" exclaims creepy middle-aged man in tracksuit



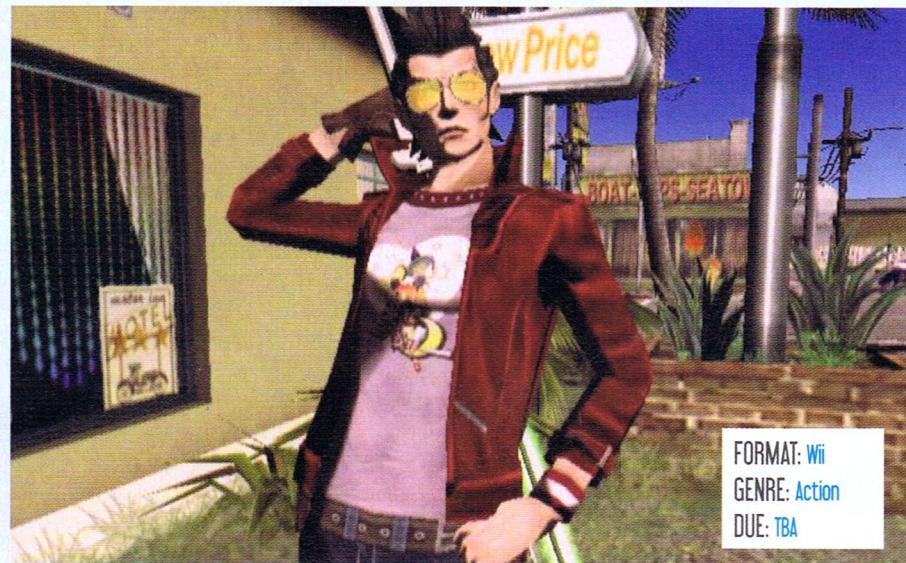
Best known for its work on the *DBZ: Budokai* franchise, Japanese developer Spike has revealed details on its next project – a DS exclusive figure-skating sim entitled *Spinning Princess: Figure Sparkling Ice Angel*.

From what we understand of the official Japanese website, the game consists mainly of touch-driven mini-games interspersed with lightweight RPG elements, such as the ability to customise your appearance and develop relationships with other characters in the game. Basically, it looks a lot like an ice-skating version of that Xbox game, *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*. But ... you know ... without the breasts.



FIRST LOOK

No More Heroes



FORMAT: Wii
GENRE: Action
DUE: TBA

Oh man, we can't WAIT for this game. Made by the same guys behind the stylish *Killer 7* action fest for GameCube, *No More Heroes* is a similarly cel-shaded action game starring Travis Touchdown – which we reckon is one of the best names for a game protagonist ever.

Travis was, apparently, an ordinary guy until he won a Beam Katana from an online auction and put this light-sabre like device to use.

Hunted down by a nefarious character called Helter Skelter, Travis bests the attacker using the Beam Katana and is afterwards informed that he is ranked number 11 in the world of professional killers. Travis takes it upon himself to become number 1.

Little is known about how *No More Heroes* will play exactly, however some details have emerged as to how the controller will be used in this combat-heavy game. The Wii remote and nunchuk will be held in various positions to facilitate different types of attacks via the A button, while on-screen prompts can be followed to perform powerful finishing moves.

No More Heroes is currently slated for a late 2007 release in Japan. More soon.

MOST WANTED

The games you want in convenient list format



1. Super Smash Bros. Brawl (Wii)
2. Pokemon Diamond/Pearl (DS)
3. Mario Galaxy (Wii)
4. Metroid Prime Corruption (Wii)
5. Sonic and the Secret Rings (Wii)
6. Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass (DS)
7. Animal Crossing (Wii)
8. Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time (VC)
9. Diddy Kong Racing DS (DS)
10. Pokemon Battle Revolution (Wii)

Share your wanted list with the rest of Australia. It's easy: 1) figure out which THREE Nintendo games you're hanging out for the most (on either Wii, DS, GC, GBA or VC); 2) write them down; 3) send them to us at the following addresses:

Most Wanted, *Nintendo Gamer*
78 Renwick Street
Redfern, NSW 2016

Or email us your most wanted at:
nintendogamer@next.com.au

Movie Review

TRULY, WE ARE ALL OF US ANIMALS

• The most insightful film review ever written. By Patrick Alexander.

You think *Animal Crossing* is a videogame, do you? Well that's old news, chum – that is strictly history book material. Catch up. *Animal Crossing* is a movie now.



It's in Japanese of course, so I didn't understand a great deal of it, but I can say confidently that *Animal Crossing* is the best movie adaptation of a videogame since *Mortal Kombat*! I understand this doesn't signify much! But yeah, it's pretty good.

The first act is very much the game in movie form. The main character – I forget her name, so let's call her Stig – moves to a village, meets all the characters, and does the things you do. The background music is relentless during this part, as they try to



squeeze in as many themes from the game as possible.

The visuals are both faithful to the game, and gorgeous. A variety of art and animation techniques are used, but they mesh perfectly. If you look at the trees close enough, you can see the texture of the watercolour paper. Consider my boat floated!

There's not much to say about the story, such as it is. It's just a bunch of things that happen. There's a cave at one point, and later it turns out that Stig's friend, Elephantina Fatchops, has a crush on K K Slider. "ME ME OH, ME OH, WEH ME OH NOW, UGH." He's so dreamy! Fun.

Nintendo Gamer's rating: Five stars, joined together in the sky to look like something rude.



VIRTUAL CONSOLE ROUND-UP

● Mario Kart 64 Leads the Pack

It's been a quiet month or so on the Virtual Console, with only a handful of new titles appearing on the Wii Shop channel.

Super Mario Bros. (NES), *Mario Kart 64* (N64), *Street Fighter II World Warrior* (SNES), *Sim City* (SNES) *Xevious* (NES) have been recently released, at the standard console-related prices (500 pts for NES, 800 pts for SNES and 1000 pts for N64). Our pick of the updates is undoubtedly *Mario Kart 64* for its great multiplayer racing action (and the singleplayer's a gas too – just be aware that the game is unable to save ghost data in time trials, much

to our disappointment), while *Super Mario Bros.* is worth the entry price for obvious reasons, especially if you've never played the game before.

In more exciting news, Nintendo has hinted at some snazzy new (old?) VC releases. Coming soon to the console will be *The Legend of Zelda Ocarina of Time* (N64) and *Super Mario World* (SNES), among other unannounced titles.

Now, c'mon Nintendo – as much as we're diggin' on the classics, give us what we really want. The magic trifecta of *Super Mario RPG*, *Final Fantasy VI* and *Chrono Trigger*. Please? ■

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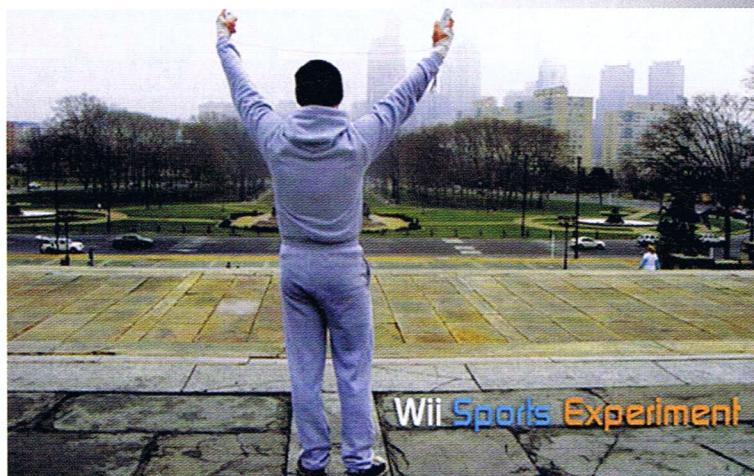
Current bid:	US \$25,350.00	Place Bid >
(Approximately C \$29,948.50)		
End time:	03-Feb-07 22:00:00 EST (3 days 21 hours)	
Ships to:	United States, Canada	
Item location:	Barnwell, SC, United States	
History:	90 bids	
High bidder:	Bidder 33	

Start saving though...

Smell that? It's fear. Fear at what the Virtual Console is doing to this gamer's NES collection. Or maybe he's just sick of the storage space needed for every game ever released for the American NES. That's right, this eBay auction is so huge we'll say it again: **EVERY GAME EVER RELEASED FOR THE AMERICAN NES**.

One lucky bidder will win a NES, a bunch of peripherals (like ROB) and the entire catalogue of licensed NTSC Nintendo Entertainment System games.

If you have the will make sure your bank balance is just as keen: the bid currently sits at US\$25,000.



Wii Sports Experiment

PLAYING WII CAN MAKE YOU FIT

● Well duh...

experiment?

"I'd like to think that my experiment proves one or two things:

- A.) You get back whatever you put into something.
- B.) Video games can and are a great way to have exercise and not even know you are burning calories.

To talk a little more about "A", I feel like I played *Wii Sports* everyday for 6 weeks in a semi-aggressive way. I moved my feet, I used full body motion, and I swung my arms to mimic the real thing. If you just stand there and make small moves or sit on the couch and play, I don't think you'll get much – if any – results regarding exercise."

For more info on the experiment visit wiinintendo.net/2007/01/15/wii-sports-experiment-results/. Or just go and play Wii instead. Vigorously. ■

WII TO BE INDIE FRIENDLY

● Original downloadable games Wii-bound

While downloading classic Nintendo-based titles for play using the Wii's Virtual Console system is certainly a welcome feature (especially if you've never played some of the classics before), it doesn't change the fact that these are recycled games in the first place.

Hudson Entertainment – a Japanese games developer and strong supporter of the Wii's Virtual Console – recently let the cat out of the bag saying that

Nintendo was planning a new download service to offer smaller size, originally created games for the Wii.

Nintendo of Europe confirmed the plans, stating that "We cannot confirm at this time in what format the content will be delivered, but in the future there will be original games available for download through the Wii Shop."

Wii-remote specific original games available by download? Consider us stoked! ■

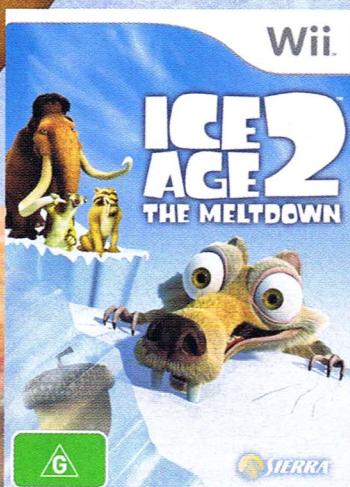
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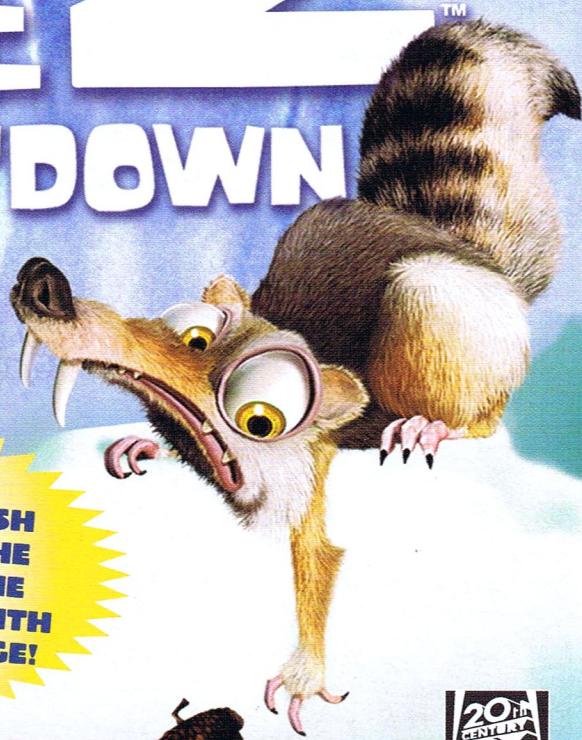


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ADDITIONAL MOVIE FOOTAGE!

G



Wii



SIERRA

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Tech Channel

DS BROWSER HANDS-ON

- The DS is now a bona fide, fandangled, intertron-viewing device.

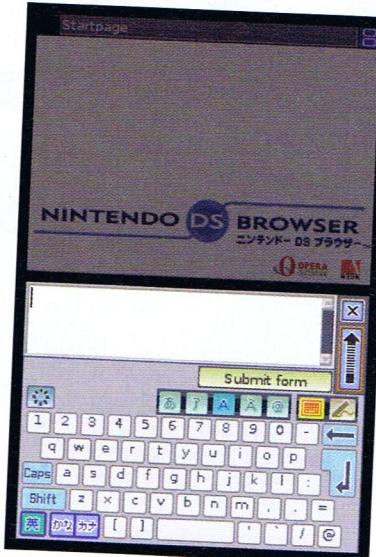
Designed to utilise the built-in wireless connectivity of the DS, Opera Software in conjunction with Nintendo has released *Nintendo DS Browser* to allow DS owners to access the internet from the comfort of their beloved little handheld. Based on the Opera internet browser – the same browser used by the Wii and available for PC – it does most things you'd want a browser to do. But is it worth the \$49.95 asking price? Read on.

THE HARDWARE

The *Nintendo DS Browser* (NDS Browser) package is basic enough to fit everything you need into a standard DS software box and is made up of a manual/users guide, the software DS card and a Memory Expansion Pack. This expansion slot slides in the GBA cartridge slot at the base of the DS, all easy like.

There are two versions of NDS Browser: one for the original DS, and one for the DS Lite. The only difference is a physical one: there are two versions of the memory pak, each designed to sit flush with their respective version of the DS. So the memory pak of the original DS is bigger and has a different form to the DS Lite one. Make sure you're pick the right one when you're picking up the *NDS Browser*.

Other than that, the only other



hardware needed is a Wi-Fi device to make use of the internet; the *NDS Browser* doesn't support direct cable connection to a modem.

THE SOFTWARE

The need for the extra memory for the DS makes sense once the browser is fired up: this is a fairly sophisticated piece of software which does pretty much all the essential things you'd want an internet browser to do. You can surf the 'net, do online banking and shopping, use email and even chat – although keep in mind that these services need to be browser-based (i.e. there's no dedicated email program included with *NDS Browser*).

What the *NDS Browser* doesn't do, however, is turn the DS into a multimedia work horse. Formats not supported are Flash, Movie Files, Sound Files, PDF files and other plug-in necessary formats, meaning you've pretty much got a browser here that is only text and image based.

HANDS-ON

Aside from slight speed issues (of both the 'net and general response times on the DS itself), *Nintendo DS Browser* does what it can to overcome its biggest

stigma – its size – as a handheld internet device. The two screens are put to good use, allowing for a fairly intuitive way to surf the net. Overview mode gives a zoomed-out perspective of the web page with a small window which you drag around on the touch screen, offering a zoomed in version of that window on the upper screen for reading. Given the small size of the overview on the lower screen, a simple button press reverses the two screens to allow you to activate hyperlinks and otherwise interact with the page. It works well. The browser's Fit-to-Width also wraps text downwards to avoid the need to have to scroll a page horizontally (which really doesn't work to well).

Text input into the NDS Browser is easy. You've the choice of a virtual QWERTY keyboard which is used via presses of the stylus, or handwriting recognition. Utilising two squares, you can simply handwrite messages like email (and even URLs) each letter at a time alternating between each box. It's highly accurate and the use of two squares speeds the process along nicely (while the last letter is processed you write the next one).

Overall, the NDS Browser is certainly easy to use, which is a real plus.

PORTABLE INTERTRON

So should you pick up the *Nintendo DS Browser*? Well, as a cheap

This Boxout has been censored

Worried that the youth of today are being corrupted by the evil powers loitering on the internet? Easy! Block access to the more unsavoury elements of the web. Nintendo DS Browser comes with parental controls powered by Astaro AG, giving cautious types the ability to filter out websites using the following categories: Nudity, Erotica, Criminal Activities, Games and Gambling, Illegal Drugs, Tobacco, Personals and Dating, Web mail, Violence/Offensive, Pornography, Swimwear/Lingerie, Illegal Activities, Drugs, Alcohol, Weapons, Shopping and Forum/Chat. Notice the Swimwear/Lingerie category? How disgusting!

portable internet device (\$250 in total) you get a package which certainly does the job. And it's certainly easier to carry around than a laptop and cheaper than PDA or an equivalently able mobile phone. But really, it seems more like a casual frivolity which may be useful sometimes rather than a serious portable device. For example, you may be sitting in a fast food joint and want to check movie session times. Bingo, the *NDS Browser* is there to bail you out. It'd also be a particularly ace portable web mail device for gamer travellers. And for those who long ago gave up physical newspapers in favour of their web-based counterparts, the *NDS Browser* offers the most comfortable way of being able to read the 'paper on the loo too.

Apart from that though, the *NDS Browser* ultimately feels like a very capable novelty. Bets are on that a browser will be built in to the next version of the DS! ■



What you need to go online

As the *Nintendo DS Browser* utilises the DS' built-in Wi-Fi capabilities, all you need is a Wireless (Wi-Fi) hotspot to be able to start browsing the web. Many public spaces feature free wireless internet access (like fast food joints, cafes, educational institutions), so you're bound to find a place to use the *Nintendo DS Browser* when you're out and about. Just keep in mind that while many may be free of charge, others will attract some sort of usage fee (even if it is just a cup of coffee).

You can also create a wireless hotspot in your own home using your PC's internet connection.

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Get a **FREE** Rayman Nintendo DS case!

Seriously! Subscribe to *Nintendo Gamer* and you'll receive a free Rayman padded DS console case, valued at \$29.95!

To celebrate the release of the excellent *Rayman Raving Rabbids* on the Wii (we like it lots, giving it a score of 80 in our last issue), the fantastic folks at Ubisoft Australia, we're giving away a fantastic padded DS case embossed with their limbless star Rayman to every subscriber to this fine magazine. The case can hold the original DS or a DS Lite, and it has a pouch inside so you can store things like headphones and extra games in. The case also comes with a belt loop and has a handy handle (hah!) on the zipper for easy access to your beloved DS. Overall, we like it very much. And it can be yours, for free!

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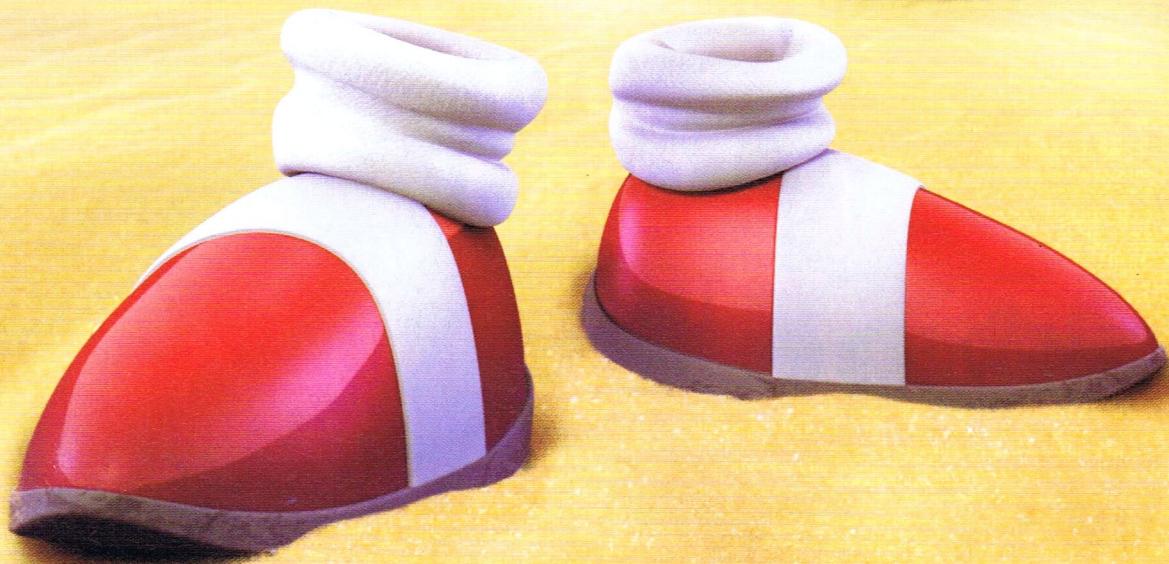
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LEAP INTO SONIC'S SHOES



Get closer to Sonic than ever before, in a fantastical Arabian Night's adventure. Thanks to the magical powers of the Wii™ console you have total control over Sonic's every twist, turn, leap and jump.

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SONIC and the Secret Rings™

Out March 2007

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EXCLUSIVELY ON
Wii



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You do? Excellent! Because it just so happens that we have some to give away. Lessee, first up we've got...

5 COPIES OF CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN ON DS.

Yes, thanks to the undead blood-suckers at Atari Australia, we have five copies of this very excellent game to give away to you, our beloved readers. If you'd like to win one, then all you have to do is answer this question: **IF MECHADRACULA AND GIANT ROBOT HITLER WERE TO ENGAGE IN BATTLE, WHO WOULD WIN – AND WHY?**

Once you've got a good answer, write it down on the back on an envelope along with your details (name, address, etc.) and send it to:

WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH CASTLEVANIA?

Nintendo Gamer
78 Renwick St.
Redfern, NSW 2016

Now onto our next comp, which is for...



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You kids know what pinball is, don't you? It's that game ... you know, with the balls. Your parents used to play it. Anyway, it doesn't really matter if you know what pinball is, because – look! – free Wii games! Thanks to our denim-jacket wearing friends at Funtastic, we have five copies of this actually-quite-cool pinball game to give away. Do you want one? Okay, well what you have to do is this: **DRAW A PICTURE OF A HAPPY KITTEN**. We've been kind of depressed around here lately, and need something to cheer us up. So come on! Make us smile, damn it!

Send your picture to this address:

HEE HEE! SO CUTE!
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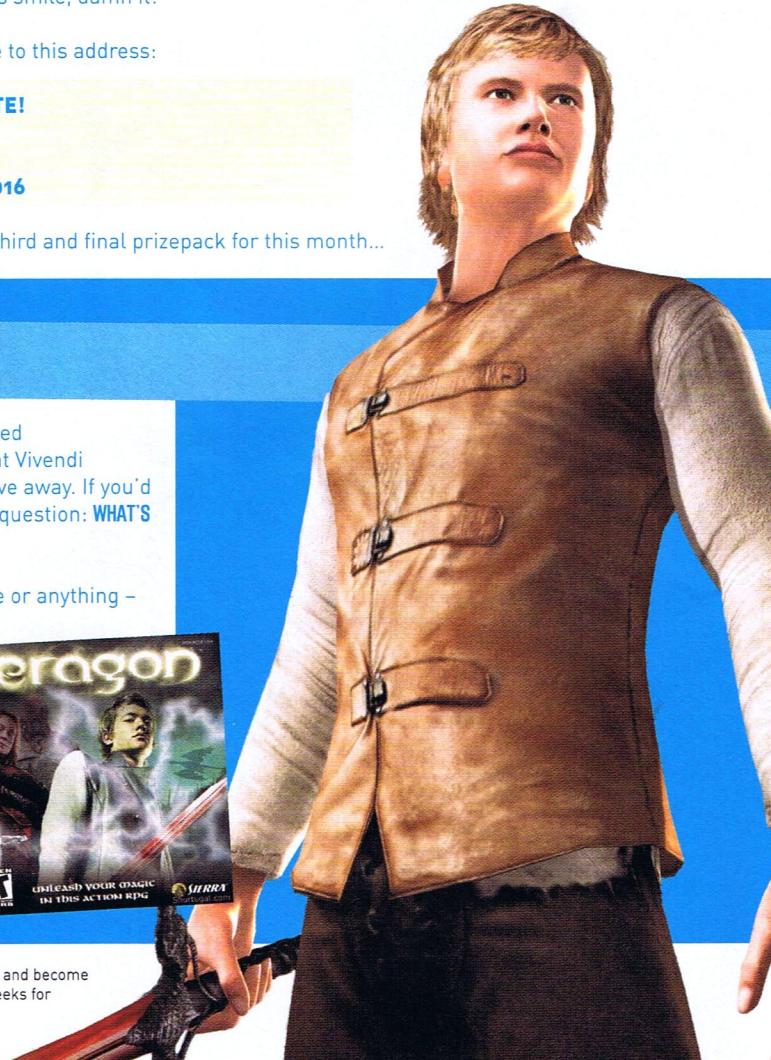
And now for our third and final prizepack for this month...

5 COPIES OF ERAGON ON DS

You've read the book, you've seen the movie, you've purchased the officially-licensed merchandise – now win the DS game! Thanks to our fire-breathing lizard friends at Vivendi Universal Australia, we have five copies of this delightful dragon-riding romp to give away. If you'd like one – and why wouldn't you? – then all you have to do is answer the following question: **WHAT'S THE NAME OF ERAGON'S DRAGON?**

Man, that is such an easy question. You wouldn't even need to have seen the movie or anything – you could just Google the answer. In any case, when you're sure you've got the right response, write it on the back of an envelope (along with your details) and send it to the following address:

DRAGON THE CHAIN
Nintendo Gamer
78 Renwick St
Redfern, NSW 2016







uch like *New Super Mario Bros.* did on the DS, *Sonic and the Secret Rings* is about to strip one of the industry's most venerable series back to its fundamental elements and build from there. Sonic Team – the collective of developers responsible, not surprisingly, for *Sonic* games – has produced something that has much in common with the blue hedgehog's Mega Drive debut, and imbued it with the sort of intuitive control method that only Nintendo's proprietary remote can provide. When we asked game director and creative producer Yojiro Ogawa what sort of sort of an experience it had been developing for the Wii, he responded: "I am thankful that I was given an opportunity to redesign the Sonic gameplay. I've always felt that I want to create a simple and fun game, and I feel that this was realized."

Given just one afternoon spent with *Sonic and the Secret Rings*, we'd say his feelings are completely justified. This is the title which will make Sonic's name synonymous with exhilaration once more. You might have forgotten what with all the recent *Sonic* adventure games

out there, but bloody hell – that hedgehog can run fast.

LIVE AT THE SANDOPOLIS

After being dropped into a shadowy corridor of an Arabian palace, Sonic rises to his feet and begins to automatically trot forward. Holding the Wiimote horizontally and dipping it to the left and right directs him to each side of the hall, collecting the ubiquitous rings that welcome you with a reassuringly familiar jingle, and Sonic turns the oncoming corner without your intervention. Several corridors later, having amassed a decent stock of rings and successfully avoided a number of spiky iron balls, Sonic's pace is beginning to quicken quite noticeably. A stairway leads upwards to a bright light and the instant you cross the threshold, the monotonous passage peels away to reveal a sprawling desert vista – and it's all downhill from there.

Literally, that is. Not the "you'd rather be playing something else" kind of downhill, more "streaking along a narrow slide that appears purpose built for manic blue hedgehogs to run atop it". Charging through the arid wilderness, your primary

task is to keep at top speed by not stacking into the constantly shifting landscape, as columns both fall and rise from the ground. From there you'll learn how to time your variety of jumps to avoid all manner of obstacles and also initiate your grind capability whenever a rail is present. Furthermore, jumping is used to trigger the lock-on system that allows Sonic to target both enemies and objects in preparation for his homing attack. The level then throws a curve ball (or off-cutter, if you must) by having Sonic mount a ledge, forcing you to shuffle along and keep the Wiimote steady as series of spikes intermittently launch themselves from the wall. Then the tempo picks up again and you're once more hitting speed-enhancing zippers that just happen to pop up wherever Sonic goes, tearing up the desert until you finally come to rest in a sunset-bathed street.

In just a few minutes, *Secret Rings* has generated an uncanny sense of speed and excitement, but it has most importantly given you a budding repertoire – one that will be severely taxed across each of the eight worlds Sonic traverses during his journey in a legendary Arabian adventure.



Las Trompetas Maravillosas!

Almost sixteen years after his first appearance, Sonic continues to command a healthy amount of respect from gamers – that much is evident when you view the sheer number of remixes dedicated to the spiky blue one at <http://www.ocremix.org>. Still the epicentre of a community dedicated to reinterpreting yesterday's video game music with instruments and today's technology, OCR has played host to numerous individual *Sonic* mixes and two massive album projects that cover the entire soundtracks of *Sonic 2* and *Sonic 3 and Knuckles*, respectively (*Hedgehog Heaven* and *Project Chaos*).



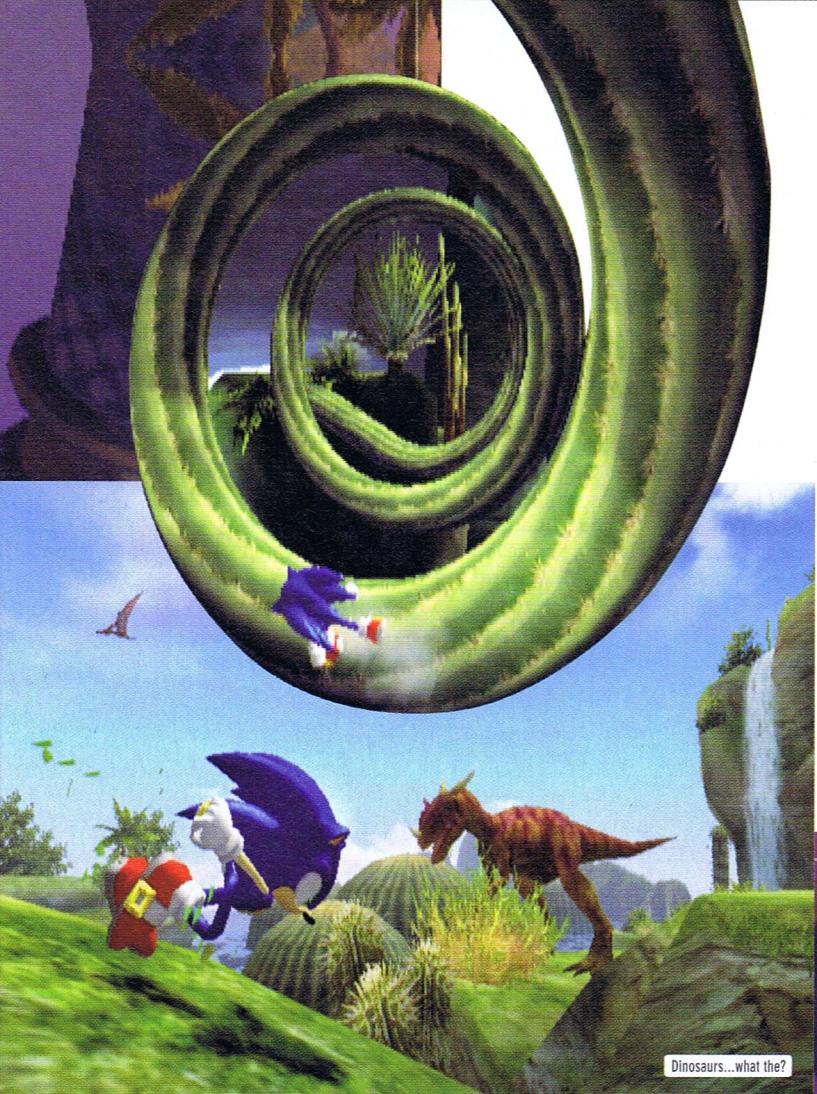
"Why I chose Arabian Nights..." muses Ogawa-san, "It is probably because at the time this project came up, I was greatly affected by the mysterious allure of the old Arabia." Sonic is trapped within the famous story book and tasked with saving its pages from an evil greater than Eggman. Whilst he will be assisted in this quest by a female jinni, she's merely a Navi-like storehouse of helpful advice. Instead, the series' ever-expanding cast is given a deserved rest and this outing will focus solely on equipping Sonic with a skill set large enough to match the age-old saga. The obligatory desert stage eventually gives way to a prehistoric jungle which we also had the privilege of sampling, but the locations as yet unseen hint at a very wild and diverse ride. "Players will be visiting different environments, for example there is a stage that takes place on top of the Lulu bird [this is a very well-known bird that appears in the

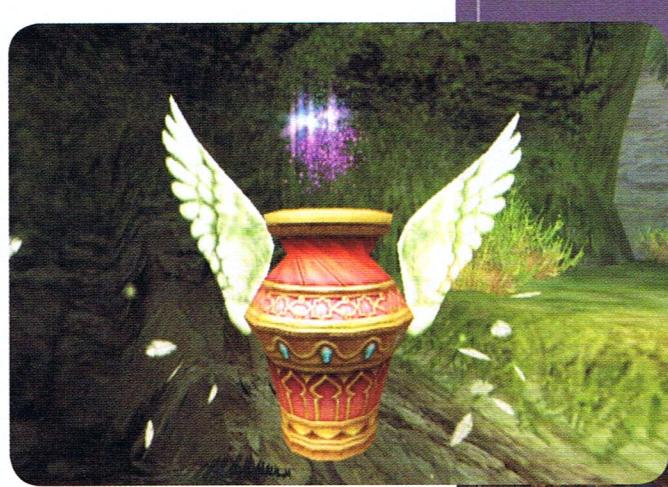
Arabian Nights story] or on top of a pirate ship that shoots out cannon balls. There are even sections where you can ride on a magic carpet..." adds Ogawa. Sounds pretty much like *Arabian Nights* to us, though we'll profess ignorance here and admit we don't actually know how heavily stampeding triceratops featured in the original tales...

PRINCE OF PERSIA

Attempting to hold the Wiimote like an old-school controller for extended periods of time isn't necessarily the most ergonomic experience, but it has allowed Sonic Team to devise a system that is expectedly intuitive and responsive – not to mention rather visceral.

Whilst you're initially required to do nothing more taxing than direct the spiky one in much the same manner as the hilarious-but-shallow Cow Racing of *Wii Play*, you're also given the ability to slow



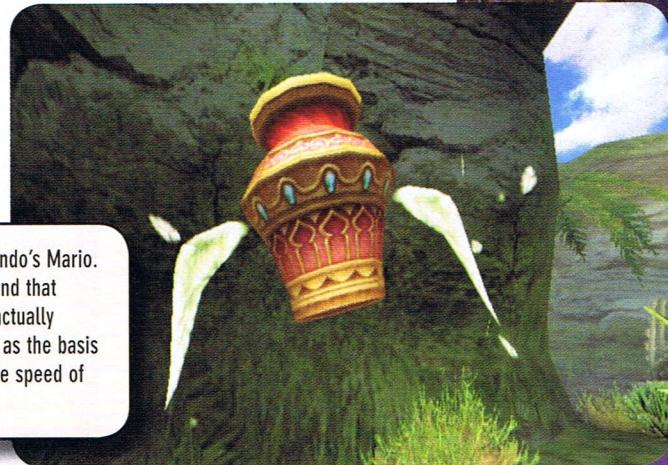


Mr Needlemouse in the House

MR NEEDLEMOUSE?



Sonic debuted in 1991 on the Sega Mega Drive as Sega's answer to Nintendo's Mario. But did you know that he was originally codenamed Mr. Needlemouse? And that before the blue hedgehog was approved as Sega's new mascot, he was actually drawn as a cartoon dog character? (Incidentally, this cartoon dog served as the basis to Sonic's main antagonist Dr. Eggman.) Or that Sonic runs faster than the speed of sound? No? Well now you do!



him down by holding the "1" button and make him walk backwards by pulling the Wiimote towards your chest. Not only does this enhance the sense that you're actually in control of Sonic - something that the on-rails nature of play could have eroded - but it is essential in overcoming the variety of puzzles you'll face when not breaking the sound barrier - stepping back to nail the final enemy of a group that you unexpectedly overshot, for instance. You'll also no doubt employ it every time something screams at your peripheral vision, causing you to halt your progress and wonder just how the hell you're meant to reach that island or item...

The "2" button, meanwhile,

activates Sonic's jumps and initiates a sliding technique that causes you to decelerate lightly in order to better prepare yourself for an attack on an enemy or object. Once airborne, Sonic will home in on such articles and violently thrusting the Wiimote forward at this point causes him to cannon into his target. Occasionally you'll have to repeat the gesture at the apex of Sonic's flight, such as on tougher enemies, or to reach the maximum height possible atop the bouncy carpets dotted around stages; but we think it's going to come in especially handy when you have to repeat a section once too often - it's a wonderfully satisfying "Just! DIE! Already!" motion. Yes.

The Wiimote also shines when

utilising specialty items like catapults and flying pots. The catapult requires a gesture which is a combination of the reversing and attack actions, drawing our hero back before propelling him across the stage; whilst the pots simply necessitate a rapid shaking of the Wiimote and are typically used to scale impossible heights. Additionally, Sonic is once more able to grind rails and similar surfaces, which is essential for getting speed bursts in certain sections.

"Basically, the main goal of this game is the "Time Attack" and the "Score Attack", says Yojiro Ogawa -san. "One is to find the shortest possible route and the second is to find the route that will allow





the best performance regarding gameplay. Other than this, there are different hidden items in each stage and you will have to find them." Judging from what we've seen already, we wouldn't have entirely minded if the game had comprised solely of the former as the pace demonstrated in some areas is laudable. In conjunction with the puzzle-solving element required to overcome certain obstacles, it would have made for a fascinating, albeit short-lived ride. Do you go with the most obvious path and avoid that irritable trifid altogether to achieve the fastest lap? Or will you take the time to give it the

The Handlebar

Sonic and the Secret Rings uses the Wii remote much like it's used in racing games like *Excite Truck* or *Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam*.

1. RUNNING FORWARD



Sonic will run forward automatically. To make Sonic go backwards, pull the controller close to the chest.

2. TURNING.



Ahh! Nice and easy now – simply tilt the controller to one side to get Sonic to turn in that direction.

pounding it rightfully deserves, so that a trigger appears to shift a nearby dinosaur's tail across a chain of islands, opening up a new branch?

LIGHT SPEED

Thankfully, as the director has pointed out, this is but one aspect of the game. Taking the "Score Attack" approach to a stage means collecting the glowing pearls that typically sit on the opposite side of the track to rings, and avoiding damage as much as possible (though obviously the latter helps no matter how you intend to tackle a level). At the end of a run, this score is converted to experience points which in turn result in extra powers. "Also, several routes do exist in each stage, but what combination you choose from more than 100 skills you equip Sonic with will give allow the players to consider what they think the correct route is..." informs Ogawa-san.

That's right – over one hundred skills. Granted, a few of them are

practically inconsequential, such as an improvement to Sonic's "steering" and an ability to attract pearls so you don't necessarily have to run right over the top of them. The majority of them are quite noticeable, though: one we viewed added an attack whenever you reversed, which would naturally prove quite useful when you find yourself surrounded by multiple foes.

There are also two chief talents that you'll unlock as you progress. "This is about "Speed Break" and "Time Break", but "Speed Break" is a trick you can run in super speed, and "Time Break" is a trick where you can slow down the time around you," says Ogawa. "After you achieve either skill, if your soul gauge is full you will be able to use it anytime." The gauge is fuelled by pearls, so whilst it's obviously imperative that you pick up as many as possible, you can't afford to neglect rings in case things go pear-shaped because they still govern your health. Sonic's maximum velocity is already impressive, but it's positively sedate when compared to the "Speed Break" exploit – this is the same barely-in-control feeling you got the first time you strapped a pair of Super Sneakers onto the hedgehog, your eyes just struggle to keep up with it all. The nefarious puzzle design exhibited to this point has indicated that pure speed will not always be so helpful, though, and "Time Break", along with the lesser feats, will be best utilised in these sections that require a little more finesse.

Each of the regular abilities costs a certain amount of Skill Points to equip, so the key to

3. JUMP!



Jumping's another easy manoeuvre; simply hit the "2" button on the right side of the controller to launch Sonic into the air!



getting the most from this system is complimenting similar traits – tailoring your set-up to damage reduction if you're undertaking a Score Attack or maximum speed if you want to blitz Time Attack. This customization will not only aid you in such general tasks, but it will also play a major part in completing the bewildering number of missions that appear in each stage. Reaching the goal and doing it in style is again only a small facet, a way to unlock further assignments that include defeating a set number of enemies or collecting rings. Whilst these segments are usually much shorter, they take place in an area off the "main" track, enhancing the feeling that you're in a genuine world, rather than a series of tenuously-linked stages. Furthermore, each one of these separate stages is galvanized with its own medal for Time Attack and the aforementioned hidden items. At this point we have no idea what either of them actually does, but if the level design we've been privy to thus far is anything to go by, hunting them down is going to be reward enough.

BLADDER EXPLOSION

Despite the fact that the Time

Attack feature and exhaustive challenges will provide *Secret Rings* with a streak of longevity a mile, er... long, Sonic Team hasn't forgotten the Wii's primary function – exhibiting mini-games that require players to look like absolute loons. "You will be able to play with four players in the mini-game and it will include simple ones and ones that will require a little bit of technique, which means that players will be able to enjoy a lot of variety" says Ogawa-san.

It's lovely to see developers putting the myriad functions of the Wiimote to use in bonus mini-games, rather than asking the player to fork out for a compilation of such distractions.

"There is one game where you shake the Wii remote left and right and listen to the music that comes out of the remote," adds Ogawa. "In another you will have to guess which treasure box has the most gold inside. You will need to shake the Wii remote and listen to the sound that comes out of the Wii remote in order to confirm which box has the most. If the noise of the person next to you is louder you might have to grab the box away from that person..."

Sounds neat, and it should make a welcome break from blazing

through stages and wondering which way is up. It should be noted, however, that even when they're upside-down and inside-out, the environments still look remarkably crisp. Even though the opening level, Sand Oasis, is a mixture of harsh wasteland and decaying architecture that faintly clings to its former grandeur, bright primary colours reign supreme. This is only reinforced in the subsequent level, Dinosaur Jungle, which is as lush and vibrant as you'd expect an unspoilt tropical forest to be – hurtling down the river atop a log is such an enjoyable experience, you'll probably forget to avoid the jagged rocks. Aesthetically, it's going to be a very smooth ride.

Regardless, Sonic Team has definitely taken us by surprise. We were anticipating nothing more than to see Sonic go really, really fast and maybe bust out a few new tricks. Thanks to the environmental puzzles and the huge customization potential, though, we're beginning to suspect that *Secret Rings* may have the ability to entertain for a thousand and one nights. Tune in to next month's *Nintendo Gamer* for the full review to find out if it surpasses those expectations, too.



Pokémon Battle Revolution®



A revolution, eh? Jonathan Ikeda has been playing the recent Japanese release of *Pokémon Battle Revolution* and investigates exactly what kind of a revolution we can expect when the game comes to Australia.

Thanks to *WiiConnect 24*, *Pokémon Battle Revolution* is the first *Pokémon* game to deliver online options. *Pokémon Online*. *Online Pokémons*. Just think about that for a moment: here Nintendo matches its supremely addicting "Gotta catch 'em all!" concept with the infinity of the Internet. No wonder it's tagged as a revolution.

In *Battle Revolution* you can battle with other players of a similar skill level – the game will automatically search for appropriate opponents. Or, if you prefer, you can battle *pokémon* with your chums via the game's own friend list. That's the first thing that separates *Revolution* from other recent online Nintendo games: it has its own friend code system, independent of the Wii's established friend system. As for why that's the case, we're not quite sure. Having a *Battle Revolution*-specific friend code setup certainly doesn't make things simpler, but it is cool to be able to tell someone your Wii code and then add, "Oh, and would you like my *Pokémon* code too?"

The best thing about *Battle Revolution* is that the online element just works. There's no fiddling about with lobbies or rankings – it's just an immediate

and accessible networked version of the offline battle mode. The difference is, you're playing against real *Pokémon* maniacs. And even if their *pokémon* are way more powerful than your puny creatures, that's always a pleasure.

What with the *Pokémon* gameplay mechanic being turn-based and technically quite basic, we didn't expect any lag at all; there is just a smidgen of slowdown in online battles, though, and it's particularly noticeable during some of the more intense attack animation sequences. Still, it doesn't affect the gameplay at all, so it's nothing to worry about too much.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The game kicks off with an announcement: "Thank you for flying today with *Pokémon* 'Pia Jet. We will shortly be arriving at Pokétopia." You can see nothing but blue skies until the island comes into view.

"Welcome to Pokétopia!" exclaims Anna, the blonde tour guide with Pikachu at her side. This is a coastal Las Vegas, only with even more lights (and a few more *Pokémon*, naturally).

Pokétopia is the theme park where *Pokémon* trainers from all over the world meet for *Pokémon* battles. There's chintzy hotel music playing. We think we're going to like it here. This is the base from which we can put our *pokémon* together in battle and, for the first time, take them online.



Before you can get into the game proper, *Pokémon Battle* Passes are required for entry to battles in *Revolution's* Colosseum Mode. These passes are cards that store your play data – what you've been doing as a trainer and which *Pokémon* you have, along with their stats. To get you started, *Pokémon Battle Revolution* offers a choice of two Rental Passes: Lin's card is for absolute beginners, while Jay's card is for beginners. (There is a difference.) Each trainer is equipped with six different *pokémon*, so your choice will be based entirely on personal preference.

If you have *Pokémon Diamond* or *Pearl* and your DS to hand, your *pokémon* from those titles can be copied to *Battle Revolution* via its Storage Menu, and if you do that you'll also be rewarded with an Original Pass. In *Revolution's* Storage Menu you can view your *pokémon* in lovely 3D close-up and mess with your inventory until it's fiddled to your liking.

There's also the possibility (for the completely uninitiated *Pokémon* debutant) of receiving a Friend Pass from a mate. These Friend Passes can be transmitted via Wi-Fi but, unfortunately for the recipients, it's not possible to fully edit a Friend Pass. This feature is just here to facilitate quick battles between experienced and inexperienced players, but it doesn't give your inexperienced friend the right to engage in proper *Pokémon*ry. That right must be earned.

Revolution's passes are useful for a number of reasons. Not only do they clearly delineate your battle experience – you have six *pokémon*

per pass, and one pass at any one time – but the limits they impose on the number of *pokémon* you can take into battle forces an extra element of strategic planning. You're not just a *pokémon* trainer – you're a *pokémon* manager now.

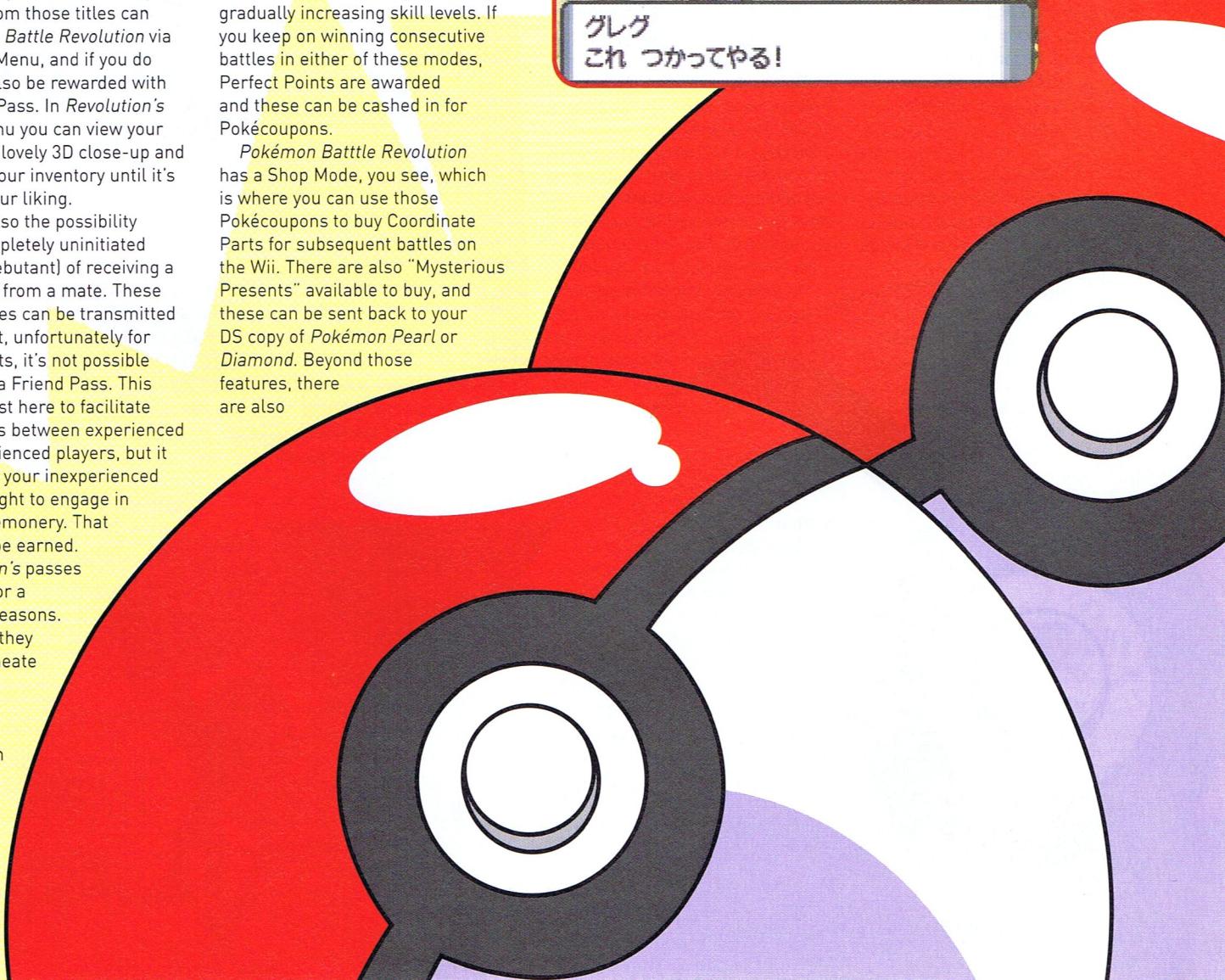
MODUS OPERANDI

Pokémon Battle Revolution's Battle Menu provides all sorts of options. To start with, there's Free Battle mode, which enables a quick two-player battle on the same system. (Online battles are dealt with in a separate Wi-Fi Mode.) Then there's Colosseum Battle mode, which is a kind of progressive arcade mode wherein you battle against a succession of trainers possessing gradually increasing skill levels. If you keep on winning consecutive battles in either of these modes, Perfect Points are awarded and these can be cashed in for Pokécoupons.

Pokémon Battle Revolution has a Shop Mode, you see, which is where you can use those Pokécoupons to buy Coordinate Parts for subsequent battles on the Wii. There are also "Mysterious Presents" available to buy, and these can be sent back to your DS copy of *Pokémon Pearl* or *Diamond*. Beyond those features, there are also

So when's it due here?

Oddly enough, we probably won't see *Pokémon Battle Revolution* in Australia for a little while yet. The reason for this is that *Battle Revolution* really works best as a companion piece to the *Pokémon Diamond* & *Pearl* DS-based games. Since these aren't due in Oz until after April, we can bet we won't see *Battle Revolution* on shelves until at least then.





new colosseums to unlock.

Revolution has ten battle arenas in all, but only five of them are available at the outset. Some colosseums affect the way battles are played out. The Casino Theatre Colosseum, for instance, plays a game of roulette, which affects the order of attacks between players, and Crystal Colosseum is big enough to hold 16-player tournaments.

A record of all your battles is kept in *Revolution*'s Profile Mode, just so you don't forget, and this can be accessed at any time. It's useful for showing off to friends, yes, but it also provides a tangible display of your progress beyond *Pearl/Diamond* and through to *Revolution*. And it enables you to write a brief introduction to explain who you are and where you're at – this is displayed online for everyone to see.

POKÉNERDS

In our first online battle we came up against someone called Tora-san from somewhere else in Japan,

although that person had failed to specify where. He had a Level 200 Lugia and a similarly powered Freezer pokémon. We had a Level 50 Pidgeotto and a Gabite. Little surprise that we were thoroughly trounced, then. But once an online battle ends, there's an opportunity for pokémon to be exchanged. Needless to say, Tora-san declined our generous offer. We'll get you next time, Tora-san!

To prevent online players from spending too much time in their decision-making process, *Revolution* initiates a 60-second countdown whenever players fail to make a move for a few minutes. And when your time is up, your time really is up. If you're counted out, victory is (quite fairly) awarded to the other player.

Before you even begin a battle, you're asked to choose the order in which you'd like your pokémon to appear. Depending on the rules of a battle, you're able to choose a certain number of pokémon from your Battle Pass, which contains six monsters. You get a view of your opponent's deck before the battle begins, but during the selection process you're blinded as to what choices the rival trainer

has made.

The colosseums here look much more impressive than they did in *Pokémon Colosseum* on

the GameCube, but there's still plenty of room for improvement. The frame-rate as seen in battles is often a bit shaky. And although

The DS Connection



While *Battle Revolution* is a stand-alone title which you can play without having ever played or owned a *Pokémon* game before, it's a much better experience if you at least have a DS and a copy of *Pokémon Diamond* or *Pearl* (DS).

There's a few reasons for this. Firstly, you can import pokémon from your copy of *Diamond* and *Pearl*, meaning that if you've been playing the DS games you'll have instant access to a more varied and powerful collection of pokémon.

The added bonus here is the ability to witness your tiny DS pokémon blown-up on a TV screen, offering a staggering increase in detail. Each has been given an expanded set of animations too, meaning you'll never have seen your pokémon look like they will courtesy of *Battle Revolution*.

The other great reason to have a DS ready for *Battle Revolution* is that it can act as a wireless controller during battles, which is particularly handing during same-room tournaments with your friends. This way you can keep your battle stats and choices – which the DS will display on its screens – a secret from your opponents.





there are some pretty effects when pokémon attack – such as Pottaishi's storm attack, which releases a deluge on the whole arena and splashes against the inside, as it were, of your TV screen – the overall level of visual impact is softened by the simplicity of the arenas. You could almost count the number of polygons on screen with an abacus. Anyway, *Pokémon* is not renowned for its visuals; it's a series where gameplay always has been king.

IN CONTROL

Each pokémon has four types of attack at its disposal. You select your desired move by pointing the Wii remote at the menu. It doesn't really make any difference that you're using the Wii remote in *Revolution* – there are no revolutionary control methods used in the game. It's still a menu-driven experience and the classic controller would have sufficed. The difference, however, between *Revolution* and previous home console *Pokémon* games comes when you connect a DS to the Wii via Wi-Fi.

With the DS acting as controller, the pokémon from your copy of *Pearl* or *Diamond* can also be copied across to *Revolution*'s storage facility. This, in turn, unlocks a DS Battle Mode that caters for as many as four *Pearl/Diamond* players in any

one location. Only two players can battle at once, but it still transforms *Revolution* into the basis of your first living room *Pokémon* festival.

To get things set up, *Revolution* asks you to select 'Connect with Wii' from *Pearl/Diamond*'s main menu screen (this option appears on the DS only when there's a Wii in the room). The procedure then automates, taking about two minutes in total to copy across any Pokémons from the DS to the Wii.

Turn the DS off at this point and you're ready to go to Storage Mode for some hi-res viewings of your old lo-res pokémon. You can also read information about your pokémon, including useful data such as the date and location where you acquired them. In fact, *Pokémon Battle Revolution* can be used to compile an inventory of your entire *Pokémon* career.

Impressively, attack animations in *Battle Revolution* carry through all the way to impact. So unlike the olden days, when Pokémons were in black and white and attacks were registered without a view of the actual attacking process, *Revolution* shows us its hits. It's all the better for it, too – the attack routines add some punch to what otherwise would be fairly monotonous battle scenes.

Although it's not going to be released outside Japan for a very long time – heck, even *Pokémon*

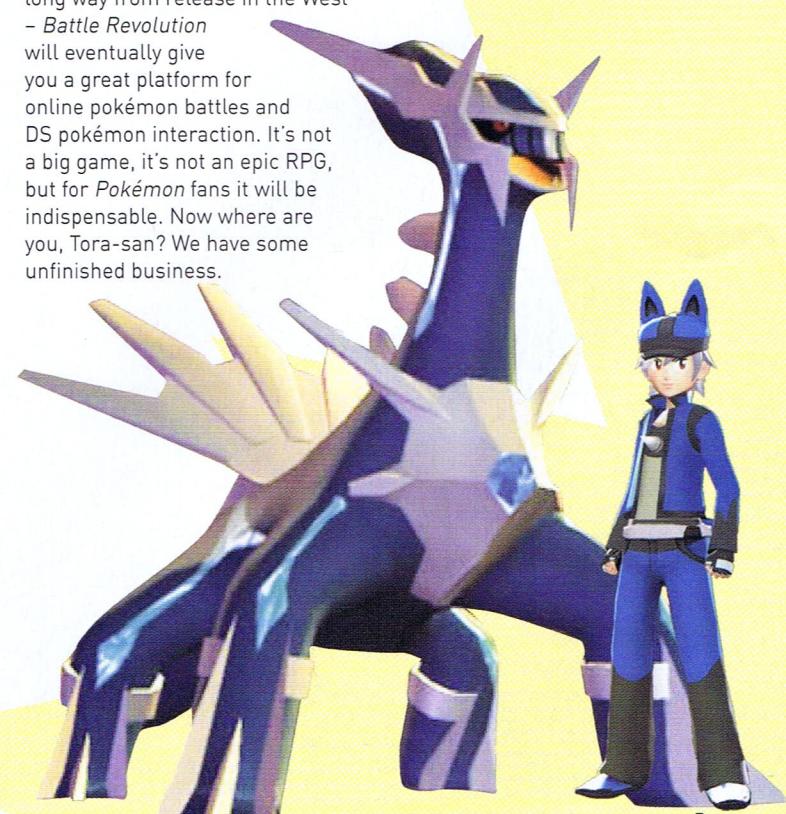
More Wii Poke Goodness?



While there's a basic story attached to *Battle Revolution*, the game lacks any full RPG mode as seen in games like *Pokémon Colosseum* on Game Cube. So when can we expect to see a fully-fledged *Pokémon* adventure on the Wii?

Not anytime soon, it seems. Aside from *Battle Revolution* there are no other Wii *Pokémon* titles currently announced. However Pikachu (and other *Pokémon* faves) will make an appearance in the upcoming Nintendo superstar-laden fighter *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*. And when will *Brawl* be out? Our guess is second half of this year. (And for us that can't come soon enough.)

Pearl and *Diamond* are still a long way from release in the West – *Battle Revolution* will eventually give you a great platform for online pokémon battles and DS pokémon interaction. It's not a big game, it's not an epic RPG, but for *Pokémon* fans it will be indispensable. Now where are you, Tora-san? We have some unfinished business.





The Wii may not be able to send gamers reeling with fancy graphics like Sony and Microsoft's respective consoles, but IR Gurus appears hell-bent on overcoming the system's limitations by keeping the action as intense as possible in their upcoming spiritual sequel to *Heroes of the Pacific*.

While *Heatseeker* was originally developed for the PS2, the time spent porting it to the Wii has clearly been well spent – every unit is glossy and the environments look extremely crisp. Most obviously, though, it's the shift from dual analogue to wiimote and nunchuk that has enhanced *Heatseeker* from its form on Sony's aging platform.

BURNOUT IN THE SKY?

Opting for a contemporary campaign, as opposed to *Heroes*' WWII setting, *Heatseeker* will utilise the obligatory tattering-up of the previous game's proprietary engine to deliver a modern fighter jet fetishist's fantasy. There's a healthy mix of multi-role fighters and specialist aircraft, including F-15's, F-22 Raptors, F-35 Lightning II's, MiG-1.44's – over the course of the game you'll amass a collection of around forty and put them to use in a story mode packed full of American bravado and maniacal smugglers. The script lays the cheese on pretty darn thick and gives the game an

over-the-top personality perfectly complemented by its streamlined approach to plane customization and exceedingly high kill-count.

This certainly isn't an anorak-clad sim: even if you're in the dark about why those little flaps on the underside of the wings move up and down before inevitably being shattered into a million pieces, *Heatseeker* is still going to provide you with the adrenaline buzz you'd expect whilst flinging about a multi-billion dollar fighter jet. Perhaps more so because you don't have to calibrate those little flaps to the correct pitch whilst decelerating at the appropriate velocitude for your given aircraft's mass... or whatever it is that sim junkies get off on. Accessibility is the key word with *Heatseeker* – planes have their main attributes and deficiencies clearly highlighted, so their suitability for each mission and your skill level are readily apparent. The various missiles, bombs and cannons strapped to your fighters are also divided into "packs" that suit some areas of the campaign better than others. It's only ever as complicated as choosing between an air, land or sea-specific arsenal, but it will mean the difference

between taking down your targets efficiently and randomly hurling missiles about in the vain hope of hitting something. When all's said and done, this simplified approach means less time in the hangar and more time a'sploding the legions of military hardware stupid enough to get in your way.

ENTER THE MATRIX

Once in the sky, it quickly becomes apparent that IR Gurus has hopped aboard the bullet-time bandwagon with their "missile cam" trait. From time to time a lock-on will trigger this feature and for an instant you'll either be controlling your ordinance or watching a perfectly framed cut-scene of devastation. The former allows you to guide



SEEKER

The path of your explosives, whilst the latter just looks spectacular – especially when you nail multiple opponents and the ensuing carnage is caught from one cinematic angle.

Looking fine is all well and good, but it would be for nought if the action wasn't particularly intense and *Heatseeker* simply excels in the sheer number of opponents it sends your way. Much like in its predecessor, you're bombarded with waves upon waves of enemies in a constantly changing mix of air, ground and sea targets; expect to see that kill count reach into triple figures on more than one occasion. To combat these hordes you'll not only have the requisite profusion of explosives, but stealth capabilities that essentially turn your aircraft invisible for a brief period of time, allowing you to rack up the hits

even faster.

In order to keep this formula from being repetitive, IR Gurus are also tweaking the defensive mechanics of aviation combat ever so slightly. Each time your onboard system informs you that there's a missile 0.01 seconds away from lodging itself up your exhaust, you'll be required to twist the nunchuk or shake the remote (depending on your configuration). It may not sound exceptional, but this interaction at one of the most crucial times in a virtual pilot's short life is something that few other sims manage to capitalise on and it feels extremely fresh.

Despite the amount of opponents you'll have thrown at you, both of these feats could well make you practically indestructible provided you can master the several unique control methods the Wii provides – and piloting your jet is a very different experience no matter which of them you employ. The default configuration uses the Wiimote as a pointer, allowing you to direct the plane and its targeting system simultaneously, much like you would with a typical controller. Another control

A'SPLOSION CAM

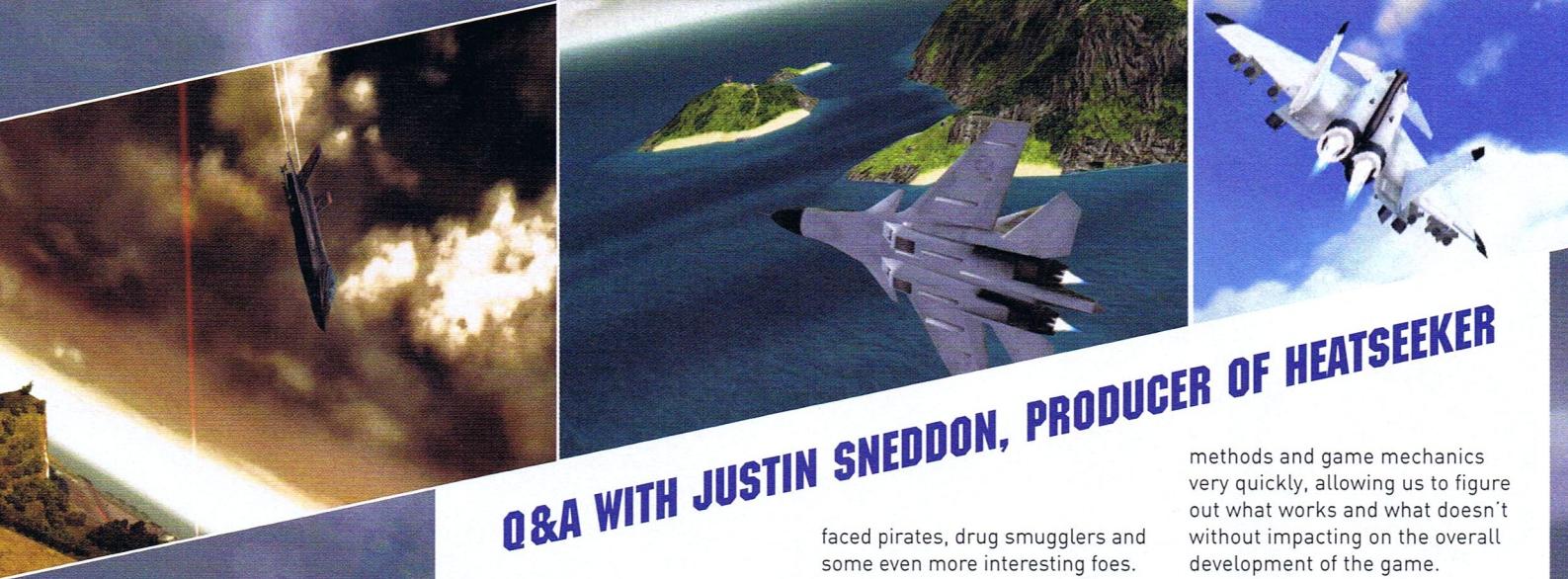


One of the cooler things about *Heatseeker* is the "Impact Cam" developer IR Gurus has created for the game.

There's two parts to it. The first is a bullet-time style switch to an ordinance you've just fired in a chase-camera view, allowing you to guide your weapon to the target and head-first into the ensuing chaos. This sounds particularly cool.

The second aspect to Impact Cam is where the game slows down to frame one of your kills moments before impact just like it were in an action movie. This will allow players to savour the experience of watching the carnage; no wonder then that *Heatseeker* has been coined the "*Burnout* of the skies" (*Burnout* is a racing game series that puts as strong an emphasis on causing horrific traffic pile-ups as it does on racing).





Q&A WITH JUSTIN SNEDDON, PRODUCER OF HEATSEEKER

scheme, meanwhile, separates the two functions, with the nunchuk thumb-stick handling your fighter, leaving targeting to the pointer alone. The one that we're most eager to spend more time with, however, is the configuration that allows you to use the nunchuk itself as a flight stick. No doubt the latter will be the most difficult to get to grips, but it's a fascinating concept nonetheless and great to see control config variation that goes beyond switching up button-mapping.

With its intense action, healthy amount of unlockable content and fine application of the Wii controls, *Heatseeker* looks set not to direct the way for air combat on Nintendo's new machine. Here's hoping they nail the homoerotic overtones.

Heatseeker appears to follow *Heroes of the Pacific*'s relentless action model pretty closely. Will it play like the previous game with the addition of modern aircraft, or have there been many changes to mission structure and tactics?

Heatseeker is an action-packed shooter full of big explosions - and we mean Hollywood big. The *Heatseeker* team loves missile combat, but not the type where you chase the dot, press fire, and something three miles away explodes - no, we're talking close-up, in-your-face, bang-for-your-buck explosions. We have a unique feature in the game called Impact Cam: this shows you a bullet-time close up of your more exciting kills. Take my word for it, you need to see this.

Can we expect the storyline and dialogue in the campaign to be just as over-the-top as the action?

We have all the features you'd expect from a game like this from the OTT voice acting to the end of the world, save the day scenarios. In campaign mode you play Mike "Downtown" Hudson, and before your tour of duty is up you'll have

faced pirates, drug smugglers and some even more interesting foes.

How exactly do the Arcade and Simulation modes differ?

If you're familiar with *Heroes of the Pacific* you'll feel right at home with this choice of controls. The Arcade mode takes away the need to understand the actual flight mechanics involved in making a plane turn. It simply lets you push/pointer/twist left to go left. The professional mode allows you to fly the plane using roll and pitch the way you would in a real plane. This adds finer control to the movement of the plane, but takes a bit more skill.

What made you opt for a Wii version?

We knew the Wii was going to be a big hit for Nintendo and the gaming community, bringing a unique gameplay experience to the player. The Wii has allowed us to use the controller to actually let the player feel like they're flying the plane. As a developer there was also the added bonus of the ease of development on the Wii platform. We were able to create prototypes of the control

methods and game mechanics very quickly, allowing us to figure out what works and what doesn't without impacting on the overall development of the game.

The various control methods for the Wii version feel unique - could you please tell us a little about each of them, their respective differences?

The Wii version has no fewer than three different methods you can use to control the plane. The first uses the Wiimote pointer to fly the plane. You point the Wiimote at the screen and the plane will head towards the crosshair.

The second turns the Nunchuck into a mid-air joystick, using its accelerometers. You hold the Nunchuck as though you were using an actual flight stick, tilting it back to pitch up and left to roll/turn left. This is very cool.

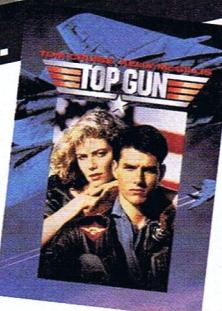
The third is a more traditional control method, allowing players to opt out of the wiimote/accelerometer modes to fly the plane with the stick on the top of the Nunchuck. In this case the Wiimote can be used for targeting, as well as certain instant evasive manoeuvres.

I FEEL THE NEED, THE NEED FOR...

Before Tom Cruise became a Scientologist psychopath (and no offence to any Scientologists out there – his religious affiliation is pure co-incidence), he was the cocky all-American star of the air-force based action melodrama *Top Gun*. Featuring expensive-ass military fighters, plenty of over the top flying sequences and enough testosterone to make you feel like they were trying to compensate for something, *Top Gun* managed nevertheless to become an eighties schlock-classic film.

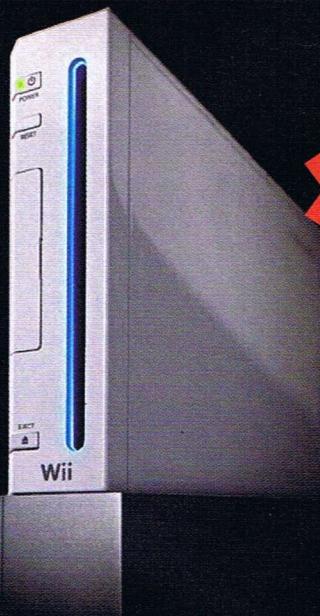
And why do we mention it here? The influence *Top Gun* has had on the look and feel of *Heatseeker* is so obvious it's worth watching to better appreciate where *Heatseeker* is coming from.

Those expecting a me-based combat in *Heatseeker* should look elsewhere – in the true spirit of the movie *Top Gun*, this game will add a tasty layer of cheese to the frantic combat action on offer.



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You've played *Pokémon* on your GameBoy or GBA to death and looking for that next evolutionary step in the series? Well, you could wait for *Pokémon Diamond* and/or *Pearl* for the DS (which are currently due for release in the middle of the year), but what you'll be getting is only a minor update to the formula which has been ensnaring legions of monster collectors into its addictive core since the first *Pokémon* was unleashed back in 1996. Sure, the visuals will be snazzier, male and female pokémon will be discernable by their physical makeup for the first time ever (er, woo?) and there'll even be a day and night cycle which will make certain pokémon appear only at certain times of the day. But apart from that? You're not really getting anything – for better or for worse – substantially new. A *Pokémon* game is a *Pokémon* game. How about *Spectrobes*, then?



Spectrobes – which is most definitely not a *Pokémon* game but which does definitely bear some important similarities – marks the "catch-'em-all" action RPG genre's first real attempt at some serious refinement. You collect "monsters" (in this case, the diverse and eclectic collection

Patrol officers – you land on a planet and discover a bearded old guy (henceforth known as McBeardy) lying unconscious in some sort of cryogenic sleep pod which has recently crash-landed. You find a strange crystal nearby which mysteriously fits into the device on your arm and before you know it you're fighting against an evil adversary with the help of two

creatures that have battled alongside you are two species of spectrobe.

Obviously there's a lot more to it than that (we want to find out why McBeardy looks like he could be Rallen's dad, for example), but that's the stuff best left to players to discover for themselves.

As for the visuals, *Spectrobes* benefits from a tight focus. Aside from the classy space/sci-fi setting and anime style of the game, Jupiter Corporation has used technology well to ensure *Spectrobes* looks as interesting as it is to play. The game is heavily 3D, and the action runs on both DS screens simultaneously (menu

Spectrobes is shaping up to be a genuinely interesting monster-collecting RPG for the DS.

of creatures known as spectrobes) and "evolve" them into much more powerful versions of themselves. But it's how you evolve the spectrobes that makes *Spectrobes* so unique.

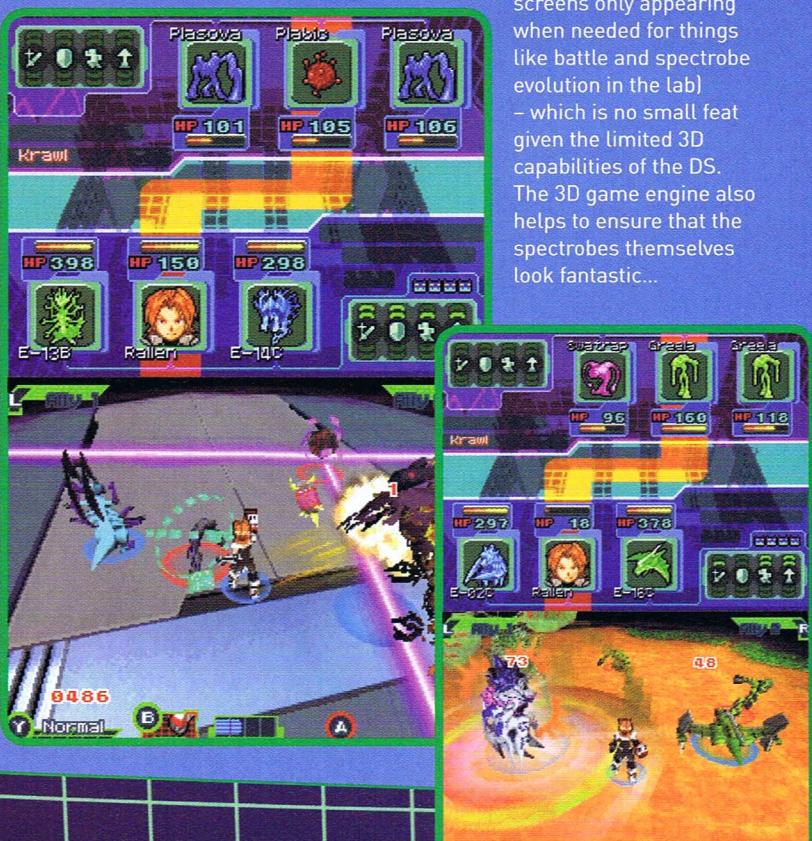
Developed by Jupiter Corporation – the Kyoto, Japan-based developer responsible for the GBA-based *Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories* and *Pokémon Pinball* (both GameBoy Colour and GBA versions) and currently producing the fantastic looking *It's a Wonderful World* in conjunction with Square Enix – *Spectrobes* is shaping up to be a genuinely interesting and truly next generation monster-collecting RPG for the DS. We've been playing an early build of the game, and judging from what we've seen so far we like where *Spectrobes* is going.

WHO IS MCBEARDY?

So what's it all about then? Playing as Rallen and accompanied by your partner Reena – two junior Planetary

dinosaur-like creatures which have emerged from the crystal. What you've just battled is the Krawl, an evil entity which is threatening to take over the galaxy. And what you've just discovered in the

screens only appearing when needed for things like battle and spectrobe evolution in the lab) – which is no small feat given the limited 3D capabilities of the DS. The 3D game engine also helps to ensure that the spectrobes themselves look fantastic...



BEST SPECTROBES



MONSTERS, YOU SAY?!

Of course, the real stars of *Spectrobes* is the collection of titular creatures you come across and eventually "befriend" on your quest to deal with the deadly Krawl which is threatening the galaxy. The way you acquire them, however, is one of the more interesting hooks of the game. See, spectrobes are actually extinct creatures, and are only awakened (or brought to life) after you find a workable fossil specimen of theirs.

Yep, fossil. Meaning you're going to have to dig them out of the ground first. With your first collection of spectrobes armed and ready, you scour the lands in search of other spectrobes and minerals to feed them with. Pressing the stylus to the ground

Gotta Collect 'Em All

Separate to the online trading and downloading of spectrobes and items between players is a card system designed to unlock exclusive spectrobes and items for play. And it's a rather cool system too. Rather than offering just a static art card with codes for extra loot in the game, the card itself is the code. Marked with DS stylus tip-sized holes, the card is placed over the touch screen and players enter in the code by pressing these holes with the stylus in a particular order. Once complete, presto: your item is unlocked.

We've heard rumblings that these cards will be placed for free at retailers (like your local game store), which if true, would be totally sweet indeed. Even if they're completely gratis they'd make for a cool way of padding out your spectrobes collection with some unique creatures.



causes your travel-companion spectrobes to scan the area; a find brings you the excavation screen ready for the delicate task of digging out your buried treasure. Using the stylus you drill (from a choice of two drill heads) and blow away debris (you can also blow into the stylus to achieve a similar result) until you can retrieve your find. The trouble is that if you lack a fine touch or drill too hard you can destroy your specimen, making for a genuinely tense and thrilling way of coming across new spectrobes – especially the more rare and difficult ones.

Once you've found a spectrobe, their evolution is handled in one of two primary ways – combat and feeding. Combat is the most automatic method of strengthening and evolving a spectrobe, rewarding a small increase in categories like attack, defence and health points as you complete battles.

The other, more hands-on and interesting method, is by feeding your spectrobes that you find and extract exactly as you do spectrobe fossils. There are multiple types of minerals offering different types of

abilities – meaning you can steer the type of creature (and what it becomes) by what you feed it.

From the roughly two-dozen types of fossils available, a further 120 different types of spectrobes are creatable. Adding items and other minerals you can create a total of 500 separate spectrobes. Obviously a big part of the game is learning how to evolve your spectrobes (and what they can evolve into), and we've got to say it's a fantastic system. With all the intuitive work and coaxing required, by the time you've evolved your spectrobe into a more advanced form (a spectrobe's appearance changes dramatically through its evolution tool) you'll feel particularly attached to them.

REAL-TIME BIFFO

Spectrobes are – it must be said –



Webisode Action Get!

Want to find out a bit more about the whole *Spectrobes* story? Go to rather funky (if not cumbersomely url'ed) website at adisney.go.com/buenavistagames/spectrobes/, and check out the awesome anime webisodes while you're there too!

there to help you battle the Krawl. Battle is also handled differently to the more static, menu screen-based battles typical to this genre. Firstly, rather than an invisible random enemy encounter (which you can never predict) where the screen flashes and sucks you into a fight, *Spectrobes* is polite enough to give you an early option. With Krawl encounters denoted by a swirling black tornado on screen, you can choose whether or not you engage the enemy in the first place. Sure, sometimes Krawl might be in the way of a location you want to visit, or after fleeing from a pursuing Krawl-tornado you might get cornered in a dead-end, but on the whole it's a much more elegant way of handling combat and letting you chose the frequency of battle.

Combat itself is similarly refreshing. Gone are control menus: *Spectrobes* is a real-time battle game. After you engage with a swirly Krawl tornado, the view switches nicely to a slightly closer-up view of the world with you and your two battle-ready spectrobes on either side. You move Rallen in real time towards the Krawl enemies and execute standard attacks.

Overall, we've really liked what we've seen of *Spectrobes* so far. We'll have a review in the next issue of *Nintendo Gamer*, what it takes to topple the king of "monster"-based RPGs.

THEME PARK DS

Interview with Toshiyuki Nagahara,
Lead Game Designer of Theme Park DS



Ahh, the venerable *Theme Park*. First released for PCs back in 1994, Bullfrog's simulation management classic dealt with the nitty-gritty detail of fun park creation and management (and we're talking gritty here; fail to treat your customers right and it's a ghost town at best, and a Exorcist-scale projectile disaster at worst). It also launched a genre of game that has been hugely popular ever since – the fun park sim.

Now the original returns on a brand new format with a bunch of new design changes to make the best use of the DS's unique capabilities.

We spoke with Toshiyuki Nagahara, Lead Game Designer of *Theme Park DS* at the Tokyo-based EA Japan Studio about his team's latest project.

I recommend hiring an Entertainer or two to keep our guests happy.



Available Cash: \$543,644

SEP 8

Nintendo Gamer: Given *Theme Park*'s depth and origins on the PC, what have been the main design and play goals for the portable DS edition of the game?

While developing the NDS version of *Theme Park*, I could not help but feel astonished at how innovative the original game designed by Peter Molyneux was, even though it was developed more than 10 years ago. A lot of similar games including *Theme Park* sequels have been released since then, with 3D graphics and additional elements. However, I've always felt that there was so much more that could be done to enhance the original game experience, which is why I took special care in taking advantage of the NDS platform, such as portability, dual screens, touch-based controls, and wireless communication.

Nintendo Gamer: Strategy/management games can be quite intimidating – how will *Theme Park DS* ease newcomers into play before they come across their first end of year financial report?

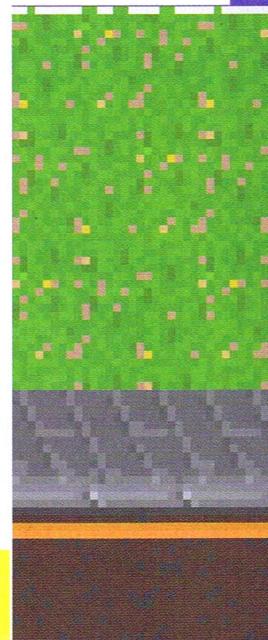
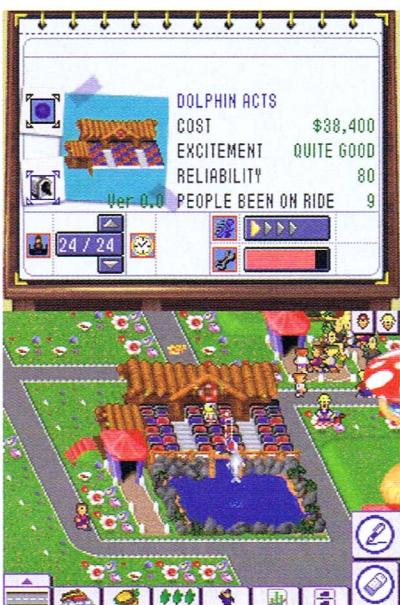
To play a full-blown strategy game, players are required to have extensive knowledge in game and rule management. Providing players with too much information at a time would cause confusion, and lead them to think that the game is complicated and difficult to play. I took this into consideration

and designed the game so that necessary information would be given to players gradually over the course of game play, and based on each player's proficiency.

In *Theme Park*, minimum knowledge required to play the game can be acquired while playing the interactive Tutorial Mode. This mode allows beginners to enjoy building theme parks in an easy and stress-free manner, without worrying about finishing the game.

All information required to play the game is given to players by the "adviser" character, in easy-to-understand text messages. Also, an overview of the game and controls are explained in text on control screen. Status of the park is displayed on the top screen, while a detailed explanation on how to achieve goals is provided in year-end reports.

Since the entire game is designed so that players can learn tips to clear the game naturally by



reading the advisor's messages, even our testers who don't usually play games picked up [Theme Park DS] easily.

What is also worth mentioning is that the game gives players the option to access each piece of help information, so that they have the freedom to check the tips any time or skip them if they want to.

Nintendo Gamer: How about returning fans of the *Theme Park* series? Is there anything new in TPDS for them besides the new control method?

Players are able to acquire new items/rides/facilities upon completing each country, such as "Medieval acts" themes, option parts that upgrade rides (such as the "Cork Screw" and "Loop the Loop" for roller coaster), and new items like the "Super Toilet" (which doesn't give off unpleasant smells at all).

The new DS version provides players incentive to complete each country by rewarding them with other new items.

There is also a wide variety of characters such as new entertainers and visitors, some of which can be unlocked with wireless data exchange functionality. Once unlocked, characters such as a space man, bunny girls and monsters come and visit the park.

Also, players can exchange their profiles with other *Theme Park* players, allowing their characters to visit friend's parks and vice versa. It will be fun to watch your friend's character visiting your park.

Nintendo Gamer: What other new or improved features have been included in this version of *Theme Park*?

Although *Theme Park* has been ported to several different consoles in the past, their user interfaces were complicated and perhaps a little challenging for more casual gamers. The DS

Nintendo Gamer: What are some of your favourite aspects of the game?

It is difficult to name just one, but if I had to choose, I would say the new advisor characters. Our character designer, who previously designed characters for *Advance Wars* (Nintendo's popular strategy game) developed completely new, attractive advisor characters for *Theme Park*.

Another aspect I'd like to draw to your attention is the modern-looking opening movie, which is also newly created for the NDS version.

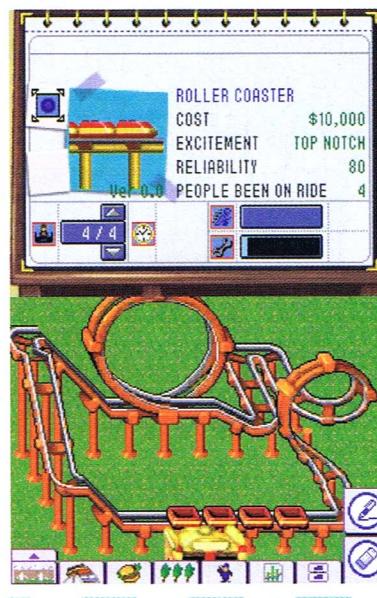
"Players can exchange their profiles with other TPDS, allowing you to visit friend's parks."

version provides very easy controls with the stylus and touch screen to address this issue.

Tapping the icon to display Help text and ticking off (or circling) selection options is a system unique to this game, which allows players to feel as if you are, in fact, a theme park manager singing important papers. The feeling of being the owner of your park is definitely one of the biggest benefits of the DS version.

Nintendo Gamer: This is the first international title for the EA Japan Studio – what else has the studio been responsible for previously?

This is the first title to come out of the current Japan Studio team. Our team members came aboard from a variety of top developers in the country, and brought with them extensive experience in developing Japanese-style videogames.





THE WII-PORT

Wherein we discuss Wiimakes

Mortal Kombat: Armageddon
Developer: JGI Entertainment/Midway Games
Players: 1-2
Out: April '07

Unsurprisingly, the big selling-point for the Wii version of *Mortal Kombat: Armageddon* is its motion-tracking controls. According to Ed Boon, the game's creative director, all the special moves and fatalities are performed with simple Wiimote gestures designed to mimic the action on-screen. For example, to execute Scorpion's famous harpoon-toss, you simply jerk the Wiimote in the direction of your opponent and then quickly yank it back – just as though you're performing the move yourself.

Aside from making the game more accessible, this system should do much to enhance *Armageddon*'s already considerable visceral appeal. If there's one thing that Wii-boxing has taught us, it's that computer violence is much more satisfying when there's a bit of physical exertion involved. Not sure why. It must be an adrenaline thing. Anyway, we're really looking forward to this, so look out for a full review in the next issue.



Prince of Persia: Rival Swords
Developer: Ubisoft
Players: 1
Out: March '07



Although based on the very excellent *Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones*, which was released a little bit over a year ago, *Rival Swords* looks like it could be one of the more disappointing Wiimakes we've seen thus far. According to the official press-release issued by Ubisoft, the game "takes advantage of the revolutionary Wii Remote and Nunchuck. Players will be able to clash swords with enemies, execute speed kills and perform the Prince's well-known acrobatic moves such as running on walls." But from what we've seen of the game in action, all that means is that pressing buttons has been replaced with unimaginative Wiimote gestures. So basically, rather than pressing the A-button to swing your magic dagger, you'll instead waggle the Wiimote a little bit.

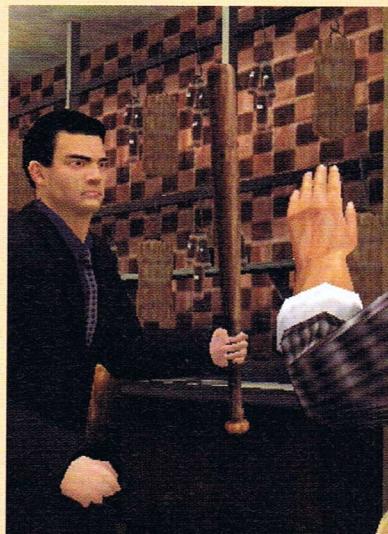
What does this add to the game? We honestly couldn't tell you. It probably won't detract from it to any significant extent, but that hardly justifies its inclusion. I dunno; maybe we'll be wrong and the Wiimote gestures will end up making *Rival Swords* a really fun game. But for now, we remain thoroughly sceptical.



The Godfather: Blackhand Edition
Developer: EA Redwood
Players: 1
Out: March '07

For those of you that didn't play it, here's a concise summary of the original *Godfather* game: a well-executed GTA clone with pinstripe suits. Now, *Blackhand Edition* will effectively be the same game, except (and this is the only major difference between the two) it uses the Wiimote and nunchuck to accurately simulate the experience of beating someone into a bloody pulp.

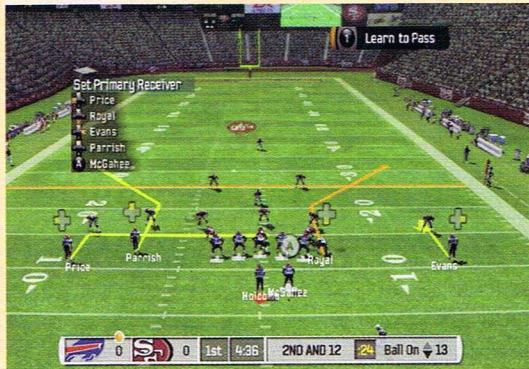
With the Wiimote acting as your right hand and the nunchuck as your left, you can grab someone by the shoulders, slam them into a wall, get in a few jabs to the face, and then – as a brutal *coup de grace* – headbutt them into unconsciousness. And you know what? That's just a TASTE of the nasty stuff you can do. For reals, this game is basically the ultimate thug-simulator. And people still say Nintendo consoles are just for kids? Pah! Idiots, all of them.



REPORT

old and new

Madden NFL 07
Developer: EA
Players: 1-4
Out: Now



We know, we know – we already reviewed this game in the first issue. But even so, we feel it's worth singing its praises just one more time, because it really is one of the best Wiimakes we've seen to date. Never has the brute physicality of real American football been so successfully realised in a videogame. Passes, snaps, kicks, stiff-arms, jinks, and all the rest of that stuff that gridiron players do are mapped to intuitive and practical Wiimote gestures. As Mr. Stepnik put it in his review:

"Most in-game movements are based on real-world motions, meaning you feel a physical connection with the game like you never have before. In a word, the way you experience Madden NFL on Wii is brilliant."

So there you go. Even if you don't like gridiron – and really, who does? – you'll still probably get a kick out of Madden 07. Now bring on the NHL, damn it!



Trauma Center: Second Opinion
Developer: Atlus
Players: 1
Out: March 30 '07

Wow, that is such a great subtitle, isn't it? So clever! I'd have just named it *Trauma Center 2: The Return of Dr. Cuttenguts*. Not because of anything to do with the game, you understand, but rather because "Cuttenguts" is just a really cool name for a doctor – particularly a surgeon. And see, Trauma Center is all about being a surgeon. So ... yeah.

Anyhow, there are a number of important differences between this version of *Trauma Center* and the DS original. The most obvious is that, instead of using a stylus to perform surgery, you now get to use the Wiimote and nunchuck. Apparently, the difference this makes to the feel of the game is profound. Aside from making the interface feel much more natural (real surgeons generally work with two hands), it has also given Atlus a chance to refine some of the tools from the original (such as the forceps) as well as include some new ones for use in the new operations.

From what our friends in America have been saying (they've had the game since launch), it appears that *TC:SO* is pretty much the perfect Wiimake: it takes an already great game and uses the Wii's unique capabilities to make it even better. Thank God somebody's actually going to release it here.



The Wii is a unique console. Consequently, it presents a number of unique opportunities and challenges to developers who wish to port their existing franchises over to it. This feature examines a few of the best and worst Wiimakes that are either already out or due quite soon. Enjoy.

AND THE REST...

Unfortunately, space does not permit us the opportunity to look at all the Wiimakes that are out already or on their way. So here's a quick rundown of some the less ... intriguing ports we know about.

Cooking Mama: Cook Off

Kind of like *Trauma Center*, in that it's an almost identical port of the DS original (which, incidentally, we reviewed last issue). Obviously, the Wiimote and nunchuck combo will make using kitchen utensils a little bit easier, but it doesn't seem to have had the same dramatic impact on gameplay that's evident in *TC*. Still, should be good for a laugh or two.

Scarface: The World is Yours

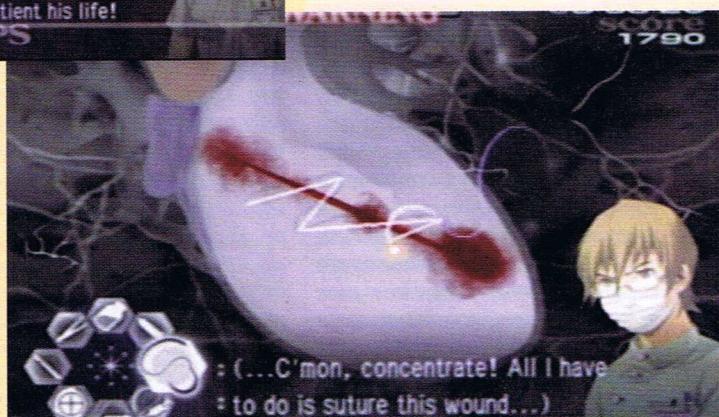
The original *Scarface* wasn't a bad game – it just wasn't very interesting. Sadly, that seems to be case with the Wiimake as well. Oh look! You can use your Wiimote to aim a gun! And apparently, you can also chop off people's limbs with a chainsaw! And ... and ... yeah. At least the guy who plays Tony Montana does a pretty good Al Pacino impersonation.

Call of Duty 3

Reviewed last issue. Standard WWII shooter whose main saving-grace is the whole "use your Wiimote as a gun" thing, which March says is fantastic. Dan, on the other hand, remains unconvinced.

Far Cry: Vengeance

An ugly, crippled port of what is on other platforms a rather excellent game. Controls okay, though. Read the review on page 52 for more startling insights into this game.



Game Music

And you should buy these soundtracks

You probably know that Nintendo games are home to some of the most moving and memorable videogame music ever composed. What you may not know is that a lot of this neato music is available for purchase in the form of original soundtrack (OST) CDs. And that's not just modern Nintendo games we're talking about here: there are soundtracks available from games released AGES ago. Like, you know, back in the old NES days and such.

Anyway, the purpose of this article is to catalogue what we feel are the best Nintendo soundtracks currently available. And when we say "Nintendo soundtracks", we mean "soundtracks from games that first appeared on a Nintendo console" – so don't get all uppity when you see non-first-party stuff listed. Okay? Okay.

Famicom 20th Anniversary Arrange Soundtracks

Composers: Koji Kondo, Hirokazu Tanaka, Kenji Yamamoto

A compilation album featuring rearranged versions of twelve classic NES compositions, this is probably one of the best classic Nintendo music albums you can buy. With the possible exception of the *Yoshi's Cookie* piece (which was an odd game to include, really), all of the tracks are rearranged and mixed perfectly, retaining the old-school appeal of their 8-bit originals. Standouts include the *Legend of Light/Kid Icarus/Metroid/Famicom Wars* medley, the *Super Mario Bros.* theme, and *The Legend of Zelda* overworld theme.



Mario & Zelda: Big Band Live

Composers: Koji Kondo, Kozumi Totaka, Kenta Nagata

A compilation of the most popular tracks from the *Mario & Zelda: Big Band Live* concert held in Japan a few years ago, this CD features renditions of classic *Mario* and *Zelda* music in a variety of genres, including jazz, latin, country, and bluegrass. There are eighteen tracks all up, and at least ten of those are totally great. Especially noteworthy are *The Super Mario 64 Opening Theme*, *The Zora Band* from *Majora's Mask*, and *GO GO MARIO* – a surprisingly rad vocal rendition of the original *Mario Bros.* theme. Such a fun album; you'd have to be soulless not to enjoy it.



Nintendo Sound History Series: Zelda The Music

Composers: Koji Kondo, Akito Nakatsuka, Toru Minegishi, Kenta Nagata, Hajime Wakai, Asuka Ota

Because we couldn't decide on which *Zelda* soundtrack to include (it was a toss up between *Ocarina of Time* and *Wind Waker*), we thought it best to hedge our bets and go with this: a 70-track compilation featuring music from every major *Zelda* game made since the NES original. Listening to this CD in its entirety is like listening to the evolution of videogame music – from 8-bit bips and boops all the way through to lush orchestral soundscapes. As such, this a great album, not only for fans of *Zelda*, but for fans of game music in general.



Chrono Trigger

Composers: Yasunori Mitsuda, Nobuo Uematsu, Noriko Matsueda

Chrono Trigger is the best SNES soundtrack money can buy. Covering more genres than we'd care to name, the scope of this album is remarkable, especially when you consider the hardware for which it was composed. Taking cues from Uematsu's work on *Final Fantasy*, Mitsuda's composition is simple, elegant, and – most of all – emotive. It's music that makes you FEEL things when you listen to it. Even if you haven't played the game, even if you don't like SNES music, even if you're a soulless inhuman killing machine a la *The Terminator* – you will still love this soundtrack. It's amazing.



Is Rad



Metroid Prime & Metroid Fusion

Composers: Kenji Yamamoto, Kouichi Kyuma, Minako Hamano, Akira Fujiwara

It's odd that Nintendo bundled the *Fusion* and *Prime* soundtracks together like



this, because – although they're both from the same series – there's a remarkable difference in tone and quality between the two. Consisting primarily of ambient electronica, the *Prime* soundtrack is sharp and immaculate, like a well-polished diamond. Conversely, *Fusion*'s soundtrack is doused in a murky industrial ooze that obscures its underlying excellence and makes it difficult to listen for very long. So, basically, what we're saying here is that *Prime* is boss – and that *Fusion* is crap. It'd be nice if Nintendo would re-release *Prime* with its sequel instead, but somehow we doubt that's going to happen. Oh well.

Seiken Densetsu 2 (Secret Of Mana)

Composer: Hiroki Kikuta

An arresting combination of bright orchestral melodies, dark industrial undertones, and haunting minimalist ambience, *Secret of Mana* is a unique and beautiful soundtrack that captures the spirit of its parent game perfectly. Dan has been listening to this thing for TEN YEARS and he STILL thinks it's one of the best albums in his collection. The only downside is that the entire OST has been crammed onto a single CD, so each track is quite short – usually around 1:30 or so. It's a not a huge issue, but it's noticeable enough to be irritating. So there you go.



Final Fantasy VI

Composer: Nobuo Uematsu

Second only to *Chrono Trigger* so fas as SNES soundtracks go, *FFVI* is considered by many to be Nobuo Uematsu's best work to date. For what it's worth, we feel *FFVII* is superior, but that's not a Nintendo game – so, you know. At any rate, *FFVI* is an extraordinarily good soundtrack. The tunes are eclectic, catchy, and memorable, and do a fantastic job of showcasing Uematsu's considerable creative talent. Standouts include Tina's Theme, the entire opera symphony, and – of course – Kefka's Theme, which is perhaps one of the catchiest character themes you'll ever hear. Do do do do doo do – aw, crap, now I've got it stuck in my head. Great. Just GREAT.



Not Shigeru

Super Mario Bros. developer and all-round Nintendo legend Shigeru Miyamoto has often been mistakenly credited for composing the insanely catchy *Super Mario Bros.* theme tune. Look, the guy plays banjo and drives a beat-up purple van to work (when he could be flown by diamond-encrusted helicopter to the front door instead), but his fabled coolness does not extend to composing for his games, okay?

Full credit for this piece goes to Koji Kondo – Nintendo's music producer/composer, and apparent the visual basis for *The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker*'s diminutive sidekick (and soon to be star of his own DS title) Tingle.



REVIEW INTRO

GAME OF THE MONTH

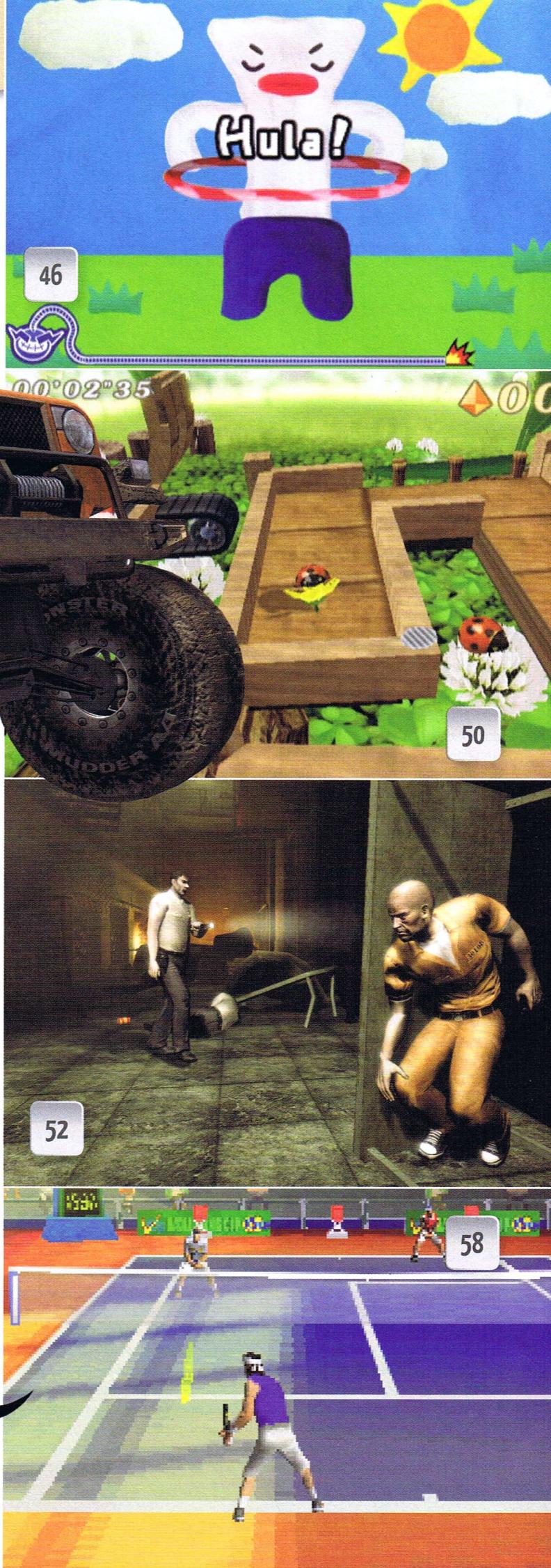
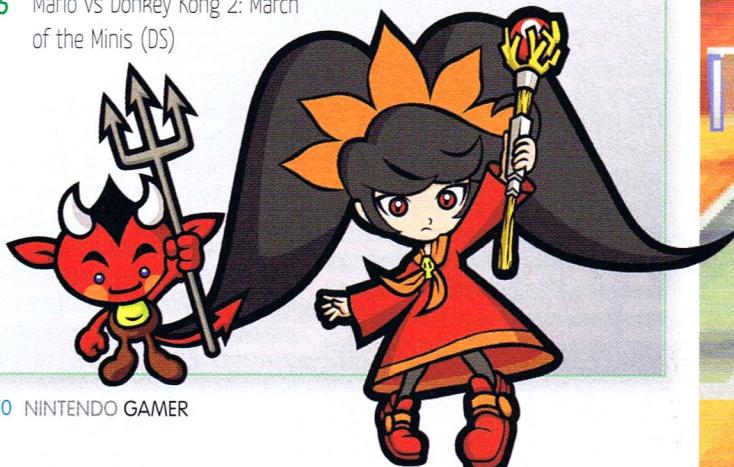
P.48 EXCITE TRUCK (Wii)

It may be lacking in the same-room multiplayer department (two players only) and it may be a touch on the short side, but *Excite Truck* delivers a compelling and fun game of 4WD truck racing.



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GLOSSARY

Gaming terms explained



Action: A style of game characterised by their emphasis on visceral and reflexive acts, such as running, jumping, and fighting (e.g. *Red Steel*, *Viewtiful Joe*)

Adventure: A style of game that focuses on almost exclusively narrative, exploration, and puzzle solving. Not very common on consoles, though there are notable exceptions (e.g. *Another Code*)

Fighting: A type of action game that emphasises one-on-one, martial-arts driven combat. Fighting games come in two distinct flavours: 2D and 3D. Examples of 2D fighting games include *Street Fighter II* and (to a lesser extent) *Super Smash Bros. Melee*. 3D fighting games, which tend to be more realistic, are exemplified by titles such as *Virtua Fighter* and *Soul Calibur II*

First person shooter (FPS):

A type of action game characterised by its emphasis on gun combat and its use of the first-person perspective to simulate the protagonist's point-of-view (e.g. *Call of Duty 3*, *Metroid Prime Hunters*)

GBA: The Nintendo Game Boy Advance

Minigame: A small, usually simplistic game contained within another, larger game (e.g. the touch-screen games in *Super Mario 64 DS*)

Multipayer: A feature that enables multiple people to play the same game at once, either on a single console with multiple controllers (e.g. *Wii Sports*), or on different consoles linked together via a network (e.g. ad hoc and online multiplayer in *Mario Kart DS*)

N64: Nintendo's Nintendo 64 console, circa 1997-2002

NES: Nintendo's Nintendo Entertainment System, circa 1986-2002

Nunchuk: A controller extension that is plugged into the base of the Wii Remote. Used in many games, including *Wii Sports*, *Red Steel*, and *Call of Duty 3*

Party Game: A style of multiplayer game specifically developed to be played in a social context. Most party games are made up of a variety of mini-games strung together by an overarching theme (e.g. *Mario Party*, *Super Monkey Ball*)

Platform Game: A type of action game in which the player must navigate treacherous environments by performing a variety of acrobatic feats. Like fighting games, platform games (also called 'platformers') are generally divided into two main categories: 2D (such as *Super Mario World*) and 3D (such as *Super Mario 64 DS*)

Puzzle: A style of game in which the player employs a variety of cognitive skills to solve puzzles, the type of which varies from game to game. Some common types include logical (e.g. *Minesweeper*), spatial (e.g. *Tetris*), or abstract (e.g. *Meteos*)

Rhythm Game: A type of game in which the goal is to enter a sequence of commands (sometimes via a special peripheral) in time with a musical beat – usually represented by a series of on-screen prompts (e.g. *Dancing Stage Mario Mix*, *Donkey Konga*)

Roleplaying Game (RPG):

Role-playing games emphasise story and character building over action. They usually take players on long quests to save the world from a dastardly evil and involve stuff like stat-points, levelling up and lots of talking (e.g. *Zelda: Twilight Princess*, *Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time*)

Simulation (Sim): A type of game that aims to simulate a real-world activity with a relatively high degree of accuracy. Mostly confined to the PC, notable examples of the genre on Nintendo platforms include *The Sims* (a people sim) and *Theme Park DS* (a park management sim)

SNES: Nintendo's Super Nintendo Entertainment System, circa 1992-1997

Strategy: Strategy games are all about careful planning. They often involve activities like commanding troops, building bases and managing resources such as money, oil and wood (e.g. *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance*, *Battlefield Wars*)

VC: Virtual Console, a utility which allows older generation games to be played on the Wii

Wiimote: Another name for the Wii Remote

Wi-Fi: A wireless network standard which allows the Wii and DS to connect to the internet (and in the case of DS, other DS consoles)

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING THIS MONTH

Q: What's your favourite Wii remote form in *Wario Ware Smooth Moves*?



March Stepnik (Editor)

"The Boxer. I've found a use for it every day on the way to work."

1. *Castlevania Portrait of Ruin* (DS)
2. *Excite Truck* (Wii)
3. *Spectrobes* (DS)



Dan Staines (Deputy Editor)

"The pimp-cane. Wha? It is SO a form!"

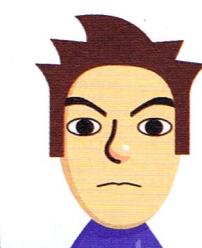
1. *Excite Truck* (Wii)
2. *Deus Ex* (PC)
3. *Rhythm Tengoku* (GBA)



Sally Woellner (Art Director)

"The Samurai. Is there anything more noble than fighting Ninja that wear heart-print boxers?"

1. *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes* (GCN)
2. *World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade* (Mac)
3. *Wario Ware: Smooth Moves* (Wii)



Jonathan Ikeda (Contributor)

"The Chauffeur. I really enjoy the finer things in life."

1. *Kororinpa* (Wii)
2. *Wario Ware: Smooth Moves* (Wii)
3. *Pro Evolution Soccer 6* (DS)

The Nintendo Gamer Score System

All games reviewed in Nintendo Gamer are scored out of 100. The following is a concise rundown of how our score ranges break down:



0-49

Games that score in the 0-49 range are inferior and unworthy of your consideration. Avoid them.



50-79

Games that score in the 50-79 range are decent – but unworthy of unreserved recommendation. Try before you buy.



80-94

Games that score in the 80-94 range are excellent and definitely worth purchasing. Add these to your collection whenever possible.



95-100

Games that score in the 95-100 range are absolute masterpieces that no self-respecting gamer can afford to miss out on. You MUST buy these games.

TM

Kororuna

Ball-rolling Maze Game



Nintendo
GAMER

Nintendo
GAMER

SMOOTH
MOVES

SHADOW
MOVE







WARIOWARE: SMOOTH MOVES

Dan Staines is smooth like chocolate, baby...

INFO

WII

GENRE: Microgames

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

RATING: G

PRICE: \$79.95

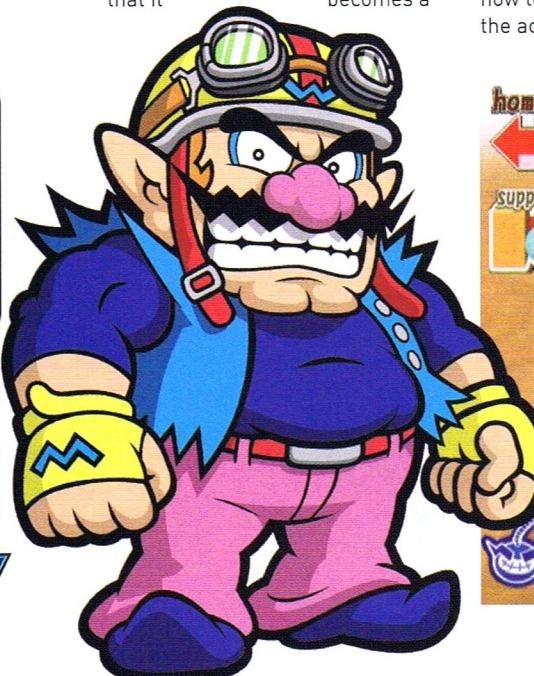
PLAYERS: 1-12

IN BRIEF:

WarioWare: Smooth Moves is essentially a collection of microgames – very short minigames (usually around 3-10 seconds long) in which the player has to perform a single simple task before time runs out.

EXERT-O-METER

As with *Wii Sports*, it isn't strictly necessary to exert yourself while playing *Smooth Moves*, but it's way more fun if you do.



As a platform to show off the Wii's unique capabilities, *WarioWare: Smooth Moves* is almost perfect. The microgame format has allowed Nintendo to get creative with the Wiimote in a multitude of unique ways, showing how it can be used to intuitively simulate a wide variety of different objects and actions. One moment the Wiimote will be a chisel, the next it'll be a steering-wheel, after that it becomes a

samurai sword, and then – and then you get the idea.

DANCE, MONKEYS!

The extent to which the controls succeed depends on the microgame (of which there are over 200), but by and large it's pretty good. Thanks to the inclusion of form guides – which are little prompts that pop-up before each microgame with instructions on how to hold the Wiimote – most of the actions you need to perform

feel pleasantly natural. In the herb-grinding micro game, for example, you instantly know what you're supposed to do because the game tells you to hold the Wiimote in the mortar-and-pestle form: straight-up with the bottom resting on the palm of your free hand. So when a mortar-and-pestle appears on screen with the word "GRIND!" above it, you do exactly what you're supposed to do without even thinking about it. Of course, the correspondence between form and





action isn't always that exact, but it's usually close enough for you to get the picture on your first or second go of a given microgame.

But even though it's generally clear what you're supposed to do in *Smooth Moves*, the frequency with which the game fails to recognise that you're doing the right thing is sadly quite high. I don't mean to say that the controls fail all the time – or even frequently – but they do stuff up enough to detract from your enjoyment of the game. It's not like the old *WarioWare*s, where failing a microgame simply meant that you didn't get it; in this one, you can understand exactly what's going on, do exactly what you're told, and then STILL fail because the Wiimote isn't picking up your gestures properly. Like I said, it doesn't happen often, but it's incredibly frustrating when it does. Well, it is for me, at least. I hate being gyped by shonky controls.

SPOT THE WEIRDO!

Presuming you're not abnormally bad at it, playing through the single-player portion of *Smooth Moves* and unlocking all the extras and such should take you no longer

than a few hours – four or five max. That's a pretty standard length for a *WarioWare* game, but with the previous iterations of the franchise, the idea was that you'd keep playing anyway just to beat your high-scores. That doesn't apply so much in this one. You see, with the exception of the GameCube version (which wasn't that great), the old *WarioWare*s were all portable, meaning that you could whip them out on the bus or whatever, play for five minutes, and then put them away again. But because this one's on a home console, it doesn't naturally

lend itself to that kind of casual play, and so you probably won't bother turning it on again after beating it.

Of course, there's always multiplayer, but even that's unlikely to hold your interest for very long. Of the seven modes available, all but three are re-worked versions of the single-player mode in which players take turns to complete microgames for points. Whether or not you'll enjoy these modes depends largely on the number of people you play them with and the extent to which these people will make fools of themselves in the name of fun. Play at a party and you're guaranteed a good time – but play with a friend on a lazy Saturday afternoon and you probably won't get much out of it.

This goes for the other three modes as well, which are basically

just charming little mini-games in the same vein as the party games in *Monkey Ball*. Darts is just like an easier version of real darts, Star Nose is a racing game with rocket-powered noses, and Bungee Buddies is a kind of three-legged race in which two people, one holding the Wiimote and other holding the Nunchuck, have to work together to complete an obstacle course. Once again, these games can be fun given the right social context (i.e. a PARTAY), but otherwise come off feeling a bit flat.

And now that I think about it, that's a pretty good summary of *Smooth Moves* overall. I like the game – it's funny and enjoyable in the way a *WarioWare* should be – but I don't think it represents a particularly good investment for the solo gamer. So if you're going to buy it, make sure you've got a few friends to play it with. You simply won't be getting your money's worth otherwise.



VERDICT



UP: Makes great use of the Wiimote; great sense of humour • perfect for parties

DOWN: Limited lasting appeal • not much fun with less than four people

SCORE:

77



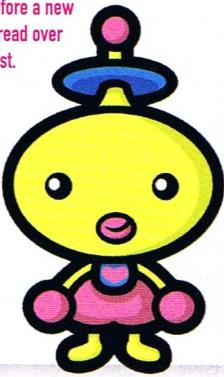
CHIKKA-WOW

Smooth Moves has the greatest tutorial cut-scenes ever. Played before a new form is introduced, they each consist of a brief-but-bizarre poem read over a soft-porn soundtrack by what sounds like a stoned hypnotherapist. The tutorial for the first form – The Remote – goes like this:

Hold the form baton straight, with the tip pointing forward.

This simple stance reflects one of life's fiercest – and greatest – sports: channel surfing.

See? How neato is that?



33/120

4:15.0

1/2

Lap

SUPER TREE RUN



EXCITE TRUCK

March Stepnik is totally willing to engage in truck exciting.

INFO

Wii

GENRE: Racing

DEVELOPER: Monster Games

RATING: G

PRICE: \$99.95

PLAYERS: 1-2

IN BRIEF:

Be the first to cross the finish line. The catch is, you'll need to master all manner of off-the-wall techniques like truck-spinning and turbo jumps.

Points are rewarded for these, and its points which ultimately mark your progress.

EXERT-O-METER

Unless you're running on the spot whilst playing, this one's an easy play



Nintendo does fun racing games, and that's pretty much the only type of racing game it does. *Gran Turismo*? Not on a Nintendo console. *Forza Motorsport*? Not Nintendo. *Grand Prix Super Ultra Realistic Racing*? Anywhere but Nintendo. While third party developers do bring their brand of more serious racing games to Nintendo consoles, these types of titles are largely ignored by Nintendo owners. It seems more people like fun, arcade-like racing games on home consoles. At least, more than they do the realistic stuff.

And because Nintendo doesn't spread itself too thin by making all sorts of racing simulators and focuses exclusively on fun racing games, it's pretty much nailed the art. Big case in point is the *Mario Kart* series. The whole run of *Mario Kart* games (well, except for *Double Dash* on the 'Cube - we can forgive Nintendo that dud because the follow-up *Mario Kart DS* was so good) are an exercise in big fun. *Wave Race 64*? Gold. Even *1080 Snowboarding* - an engineless racing game plays beautifully and more importantly, is a gas to play.

RACING GOLD

Now, add *Excite Truck* to that

list. We weren't sure what to make of *Excite Truck* when we played early demo versions of the game. Being a Wii title for a then unreleased console, the focus lay almost exclusively on the method of control - i.e. the handlebar technique where you grip the Wii remote horizontally and steer by tilting the controller from side to side. With acceleration handled by the "2" button (and we think brakes are assigned to the "1" button, but you know, you never really have to use them - at least, not in regular races in *Excite Truck*) and the turbo boost handled by any direction of the d-pad, *Excite Truck* controls are easy, intuitive, and most importantly - work an absolute treat. After a few minutes adjusting to the system, you completely forget about them. They're good.

Control method aside, not much else was known about how *Excite Truck* was going to play out. Would it be a straight-up racer like *1080 Snowboarding*? Would it feature weapon attacks and power-ups like *Mario Kart*? The answer is no to both: *Excite Truck* is a racing game which puts the focus on how you get to the finish line. You're in big pick-up trucks and four-wheel drive jeeps speeding around undulating

outdoor courses on mostly loose ground (when not flying through the air care of the many jumps in each course), dodging trees and other obstacles as you go.

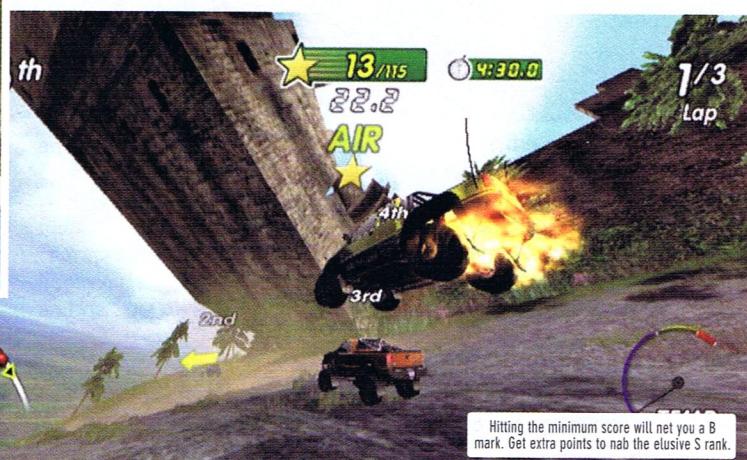
As mentioned though, the trick is that *Excite Truck* is more interested in making sure you have a *really* good time on the way to the finish line than simply being first to do so. Using a points-based system to track progress towards the next track and subsequent cups (there are several cups, each with multiple courses to play through), you can quite easily be the first to cross the finish line and score a measly D on the race summary. So while you'll get bonus points for finishing first, you'll get most points by pulling-off





RACING TO THE WIGGLES

There's one thing about *Excite Truck* that really grates: the soundtrack. It's all heavy rock-pig squealing guitar music, and it's relentless to boot. Thankfully *Excite Truck* supports custom soundtracks. Simply copy your MP3s to an SD card and pop it into the SD slot on the Wii. You can then select to play these tracks in-game from the options menu. Thank the lord: The Wiggles are a great companion soundtrack to some of the game's trickier courses.



several driving techniques (or tricks) repeatedly throughout the race. *Excite Truck* is the sort of game where you can finish last and still score the minimum B grade required to progress to the next course.

And the driving 'techniques'? There are several, and while there may seem an overwhelming selection of them at first it's not long before you know them well enough to string them all together and are nabbing the points. Points are rewarded for getting big air (staying airborne as long as possible), drifting round corners, tree runs (driving for a minimum set time close to trees without crashing – granted, there are a lot of trees in *Excite Truck*), spinning your truck, throwing other trucks (by activating the terrain morphs while other racers are on them), jump combos (linking turbo jumps together), truck smashes (ramming other racers), ring jumps (literally jumping through hoops) and even crashing your truck. There clever thing about this trick system is that

merely managing to pull off a trick is rewarded with few points; pulling them off with style (and usually for some duration) is where the serious points are.

But that's not all. Further ensuring that races aren't simply a matter of relying on the gas pedal to get to the finish line, developer Monster Games has thrown some extra speed bonuses into the fray. The ever important turbo boost (which is primarily used to help you get some big air of the many jumps in the game) has finite use, quickly overheating when relied on. The turbo doesn't overheat in water, so the many shallow water sections of track in *Excite Truck* effectively offer temporary unlimited boost.

Landing from a jump on all four tires at once (tilting the controller back offers greater distance while in the air; pushing forward shortens the jump) gives you another temporary speed boost. There's also an invincibility/speed boost in the form of a "POW" floating block on the track which lets you fly through trees (nabbing



RACING TO THE WIGGLES

tree run point combos) or on the track at great speed – also good for getting bit hits on other trucks. Getting these can be tricky but if you do the rewards are obviously worth it.

Hell, you're even given a second chance after you crash your truck. If you fill a bar by tapping the "1" button rapidly before the time runs out you're placed back on the track with a speed boost activated, meaning you're never really out of race contention.

The end result is a race where there's always some way to effect how fast you're going and how many points you're scoring. And that's precisely why *Excite Truck* is so much fun: races aren't just a simple case of steering your way to victory. You'll have to call on your arsenal of off-the-wall driving tricks to make it through to the next round, especially as the difficult ramps up in some of the later courses.

NO MARIO KART

On the technical side, *Excite Truck* is currently the best looking game on Wii – particularly the sense of speed it conveys when in turbo



mode – without being breathtaking. Aside from the main race mode there's a fun set of challenges to take part in, and there's a two player mode too – which while fun lacks the strategic depth of multiplayer classic *Mario Kart*. Why there isn't a four player mode or an online mode is beyond us.

And that's probably the biggest disappointment of *ET*: it doesn't have the strength in multiplayer that we were hoping for.

As for the singleplayer racing game? Man, this game is ace. We were expecting *ET* to be loads of fun and it's great to see that Nintendo has succeeded to deliver another captivating racing title.

VERDICT

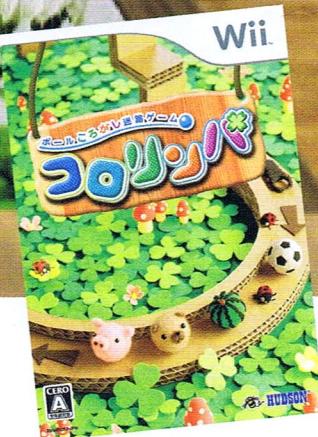
BUY

UP: Fast, fun, play • Challenges are a nice alternative • Great graphics

DOWN: Limited multiplayer • Too easy to crash? • God awful soundtrack

SCORE:

86



KORORINPA

A mix of *Super Monkey Ball* and *Mercury Meltdown*, Jonathan Ikeda gets acquainted with the many balls on offer in this Japanese puzzle oddity.

INFO

Wii

GENRE: Puzzle

DEVELOPER: Hudson

RATING: G

PRICE: \$99.95

PLAYERS: 1-2

IN BRIEF:

Using the Wii remote to manipulate the game world, players turn and twist balls with differing physical properties (from fast to slow, for example) through environmental obstacles to the level's goal.

EXERT-O-METER

Much like *Super Monkey Ball*, this one's easy on the wrists.



Probably the most significant trait of the Wii remote is that it can re-energise even the most basic of game concepts. If *Kororinpa* had been released on the GameCube, say, no one would have looked twice. With hand movement control afforded by the Wii remote, though, *Kororinpa* asks a question in screenshots: how would it feel to control that?

The aim of the game is simply to guide a ball from the start of a course to the finish (which is helpfully marked 'GOAL'). And along the way, you'll pick up some orange crystals. (Because if you don't get all the crystals, you won't be able to access the GOAL.)

Complete a course and you can try the next one. Simplicity itself.

As you roll, however, there are various factors to consider. Green crystals, which are located in difficult-to-reach areas of each stage, are rewarded with Easter Eggs; complete levels quickly enough and you'll be awarded gold medals, and accumulation of those shiny tokens can unlock secret stages. It's a neat incentive system that leaves you wanting for the next stage and for the hidden goodies.

Unlike *Monkey Ball*, which

is a game of monkeys inside balls, *Kororinpa* is just a game of balls. And that, believe it or not, makes for a completely different experience. Each ball has unique physical properties, which means that the inertia of each ball is different.

There are 20 balls to unlock, graded according to their characteristics. Beginner balls – spherical pigs, penguins, kittens, and frogs – don't move very quickly but have a high level of friction. Standard balls (a good type to have,



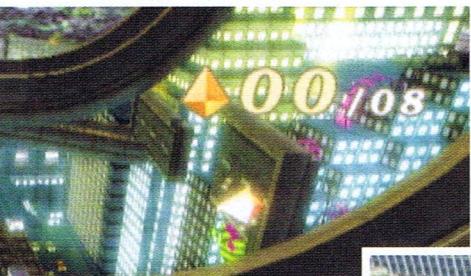
The Death Star themed level.



Right, I want to play some Katamari after seeing this.

RETRO GOODIES

Fans of retro videogame tunes should be chirpy to know that *Kororinpa* contains the classic *Star Soldier* and *Bomberman* theme tunes in its repertoire, although you'll have to unlock them with some daring crystal collection stunts.



“...levels...that seem to have been designed for the exclusive pleasure of masochists...”



we reckon) include a football and a watermelon. Pro balls include Saturn (the planet, not the console) and a lovely night sky marble. This game has balls, then...

SUDDEN DROPS

There are sections of *Kororinpa*'s most difficult levels, beginning with the mile-high suspended ringroad of Level 21, that seem to have been designed for the exclusive pleasure of masochists. Until, that is, you realise that *Kororinpa* is deliberately bringing out the latent masochism in all players. You will keep returning, it scowls, and you'll like it.

It's just a shame that there's not enough content here to perpetuate the cycle of punishment and pleasure for longer than a week or so. Levels are unlocked progressively, with a total of 50 standard courses to play through. And although there are a few stages that took us 30 minutes to clear successfully, most of the 50

can be completed after a few turns and some can even be whizzed through on the first run. There is a mirror mode, but turning left where we once turned right seems to be just a bit pointless. Slightly more encouraging are the 15 secret levels that can be unlocked by collecting green crystals in the main game, including collection bonanza stages that remind us of the original *Sonic the Hedgehog*'s bonus levels.

Two-player mode is a race to the finish through any of *Kororinpa*'s main stages (mirror mode can also be played in 2P). It's described as a Battle Mode yet it's impossible to have any real effect on the other player without, like, you know, twisting her arm or something. The game flicks to split-screen mode, displaying only a ghost of the other player's ball; you can't knock the other player's ball off course, which is a shame. Because of that lack of fight, the two-player mode turns stale quicker than a loaf of

bread in a dry pantry (for want of a better analogy).

PRETTY GIRL?

Kororinpa's visuals are terrible and delightful in roughly equal measure. The game outputs at a maximum resolution of 480i, which makes it look pig ugly on any decent LCD TV. Yet at the same time, Hudson has packed the game full of pretty colours and twee imagery, so it's also piglet cute. (Literally, in the case of *Kororinpa*'s unlockable Dinking Piggy Ball.) Crucially, the game's camera gives a good view of the action.

Kororinpa is certainly indebted to the likes of *Marble Madness* and *Monkey Ball* but it's also full of imagination: there are levels that can be revolved through 360 degrees, magnetic rails to take your ball across chasms, tubular conduits that link sections of

track, and sticky mandarin jelly. Sadly, *Kororinpa* is also riddled with contradictions: it's difficult but not expansive, it's technically primitive yet shamelessly cute. It doesn't last long – you can see everything the game has to offer in the space of a few hours – but *Kororinpa* is wonderful fun until the credits roll.

VERDICT

BUY

UP: Plays very well • looks and sounds perky • great use of the Wii remote • some cool unlockables.

DOWN: Over way too quickly • two-player mode is dull.

SCORE:

80



SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

Gomes Chenbalin wonders if Wii-remote waving is easily spotted in the dark...

INFO

WII

GENRE: Spy action

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft

RATING: MA15+

PRICE: \$99.95

PLAYERS: 1-2

IN BRIEF:

Sam Fisher is an agent of Third Echelon, a secret agency concerned with national security. In Double Agent he infiltrates a terrorist organisation becoming one of them, however how far will he go not to blow his cover?

EXERT-O-METER

There's a bit of wagging going on here, but nothing serious



The *Splinter Cell* series is an engaging take on the whole spy genre of film and books which has been perfectly transposed into game form. Rather than having you bash down doors you as agent Sam Fisher climb pipes and navigate air ducts to let yourself in; instead of being wrapped in bullet clips and firing canon-sized guns at opponents you use the shadows to get behind an enemy to garrote him. Add a suitably gruff back-story worthy of the Tom Clancy name, and you've a fairly cerebral action game that rewards thought, care and patience over cheap and nasty thrills.

And now we've got the Wii version. Mind, this game has already appeared on virtually every other console available. So what does the Wii version offer players?

Well, first and foremost, Wiimote-based controls. Employing a similar control scheme to Wii firstperson shooters, an on-screen aiming reticule is moved by pointing the Wiimote, with the camera (or your view) shifting when the reticule reaches the screen's edge. The trouble here is that *Double Agent* is a thirdperson game, meaning you can easily shift the camera to face you making

for troublesome navigation. It's workable, but it certainly isn't elegant and feels forced.

Other than that, there are some basic gesture based controls which seem more a novelty-like alternative to standard button presses. Jumping, for example, comes via an up-and-down shake of the nunchuk. If the aim of the gesture-based controls was to simplify the many actions Sam can perform, then Ubisoft has failed – while you can easily become proficient in the basics of Fisher's control it's all a bit too cumbersome to ever really become second nature.

BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

And *Double Agent* is another ugly Wii game too. We're not talking general artistic direction here either; Ubisoft was just a little too optimistic in what it thought the system could technically handle and the results are visuals that are muddy, incomplete and horribly artefact-laden at times. Constantly seeing the seams of the game world isn't great for game immersion.

Which is a shame because otherwise, *SCDA* is quite an entertaining game. There's all

manner of super-agent things to do and the story is actually compelling. The game even features a morality meter of sorts, making you think twice about the actions you take. Playing as a double agent infiltrating a terrorist organisation, you're asked to occasionally take part in murder and other illegal acts. Do you comply and keep your cover or do you abide by your professional ethical leanings and decline? That the game makes you think about the consequences of your actions is an impressive hook which we hope we see more of.

Ultimately *SCDA* just doesn't quite feel at home on the Wii. It's certainly not a disaster; just be prepared to put up with what feels like a rushed port.



VERDICT

UP: Great story • Plenty of moves to perform • Some decent spu-based puzzles

DOWN: Controls are iffy • Looks rough

SCORE:

61



FAR CRY VENGEANCE

Gomes Chenbalin definitely agrees that there's trouble brewing...

INFO

WII

GENRE: Firstperson shooter

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft

RATING: M

PRICE: \$99.95

PLAYERS: 1-2

IN BRIEF:

Vengeance is a firstperson shooter set in a jungle. Running around and collecting weaponry and ammo, you shoot your way through an army of people out for your blood. Features great Wii remote-based controls.

EXERT-O-METER

Occasional waggles of the remotes are required, but that's all.



It's funny. When it comes to the Wii, the most pressing challenge facing developers of established genres is how to take traditional control methods and adapt them to the Wii's new control scheme. The rest of it – like, you know, the nuts and bolts of game development including level design, script, enemy AI and the like – is by and large the same on the Wii as it is on any other console, so you'd expect the game itself to be pretty much spot on.

So it's somewhat surprising that *Far Cry Vengeance* totally inverts this norm of Wii game design challenges. What we have here is a game that pretty much nails the free-form nature of the Wii's controls but delivers a game which is straightforward, stale and utterly lacking in most respects.

MORE LIKE DISTANT SOBING

And did I say ugly? *Vengeance* is the sort of ugly that only a mother could love. It's not only the utter reliance on horrid outdoor jungle flora (which only really works on more powerful console systems), it's the basic character models and the awful way in which the visuals chug and splutter along the way. Unwanted graphical artefacts are all too common in

Vengeance. While the *Far Cry* series is renowned for its visual bounty, the Wii version struggles to offer anything redeemable with its visuals.

And it starts from the very beginning too. The opening cutscene has been created using the in-game engine, a common trick which can work well. Trouble is that this cutscene has been compressed horribly causing really large boxy artefacts and a washed-out appearance of the scene. It's the ugliest video we've ever seen in a videogame, and that's saying plenty. Even the DS can manage better than this.

LIKE SITTING DUCKS

But hey, the Wii's not about fab graphics, right? So we'll forgive that and move along to what you actually do in the game. So you're this badarse character who can morph into a vicious wildebeest (er, yeah – and this is not really explained in the game either) and can select from a score of different firearms to blast things with, and all you end up doing is running down jungle pathways shooting stupid AI enemies who stand about and occasionally shoot back when you tear into them. You're more than likely to die from

your own grenade's blast than an enemy gun – which is fun for a few minutes but not much more. *Vengeance* is an old-style arcade shooter lacking in challenge.

At least the controls work. This is firstperson controls done like *Red Steel* or *Call of Duty 3* (you point and shoot and move with the nunchuk), with innovation in the form of a lock button – holding down "A" while aiming holds you steady allowing to you aim with greater precision. You can also customise the sensitivity of the Wii remote in-game, with the end result being silky smooth controls which are a joy to use.

Great controls aren't enough, however, to carry a game. Avoid this one.

VERDICT

AVOID

UP: Great controls • Shooting is easy • Lock-on feature in shooting is fantastic

DOWN: Totally ugly • Slow pacing • Terrible enemy AI

SCORE:

40

INT	43	0	33	17	20
MND	50	0	19	0	0
LCK	20	0	20	0	0

LV.35

Encyclopedia

NEXT

11700

GOLD

1500

NO.

1

2

HP
EXP
ENEMIES KILLED

SP



INT	37	0	51	23	23
MND	19	0	56	0	0
LCK	30	0	23	0	0

LV.40

Flame Whip

MASTER

Knife

NEXT

1369

GOLD

15307

NO. 120 Vapula

1 Hex

2

HP
EXP
ENEMIES KILLED

SP

12

20



CASTLEVANIA:

March Stepnik can't conceive of a world without *Castlevania*.

INFO

WII

GENRE: Action

DEVELOPER: Konami

RATING: TBC

PRICE: \$79.95

PLAYERS: 1-2

IN BRIEF:

Castlevania Portrait of Ruin pits two vampire hunters – Jonathan and Charlotte – against the majesty of Dracula's castle. A side-scrolling action game, the sprawling castle is explored piece by piece, with new areas opened once new abilities (like being able to jump higher) are learned.

This second *Castlevania* side-scrolling emo-action game on DS is in many ways superior to last year's *Dawn of Sorrow* (*DoS*). It's a perfect example of a developer getting nice and cosy with a new piece of hardware and developing to the strengths of both a game and the system it appears on. Players of *DoS* will be pleased to know that the strongest faux pas of *PoR*'s predecessor *DoS* – the god-awful touch-screen drawn boss glyph system – is completely absent from the game. It just didn't work. Thankfully, you can pretty much keep that stylus stowed away because *PoR* focuses on the series' main strengths: solid 2D side-scrolling action against lovingly crafted horror-show enemies in Dracula's filthy and opulent castle.

LITTLE STEPS

The only trouble is that this focus on the series' main strengths means that the formula is getting a wee bit stale. Castle locations, creatures (the vast majority of them are all familiar favourites) and even the important show piece battles in *PoR* are mostly repeats from previous *Castlevania* games. That's not to say *PoR* is

PORTRAIT OF RUIN

a totally half-arsed *Castlevania*, however. On the contrary, there are some nice new touches which show not happy to rest on its fairly comfortable laurels.

First up is the use of two characters in the game. You actually play as both new characters – the weapons-based Jonathan and magic-casting Charlotte – although one at a time with the non-player controlled character being run by the game's AI, with a simple button-press allowing you to swap between the two. The dual character aspect is an important aspect of play; some enemies (bosses in particular) require particular attacks, while many new puzzles require co-operative teamwork to best. The dual-character based charged attacks are particularly ace too.

The other major difference with *PoR* is the inclusion of new areas to battle in. The titular portrait actually refers to a bunch of portrait-based portals scattered throughout the castle. Travelling through these takes players to remote locations offering entirely newly-themed areas to explore. While this amounts to little more than a new lick of paint being applied to the same castle-based



corridors, it's refreshing to be fighting in the bright yellows of the Egyptian-based world or the interesting design of a theatre house gone wrong as well as Dracula's castle.

Overall, *Portrait of Ruin* has been done right – and by IGA it should've been because the developers have had plenty of time perfecting *Castlevania*'s execution. Returning fans should be pleased to know that there's some freshness peppered through the series' recurring themes, while newcomers... Man, you're about to fall in love.

VERDICT

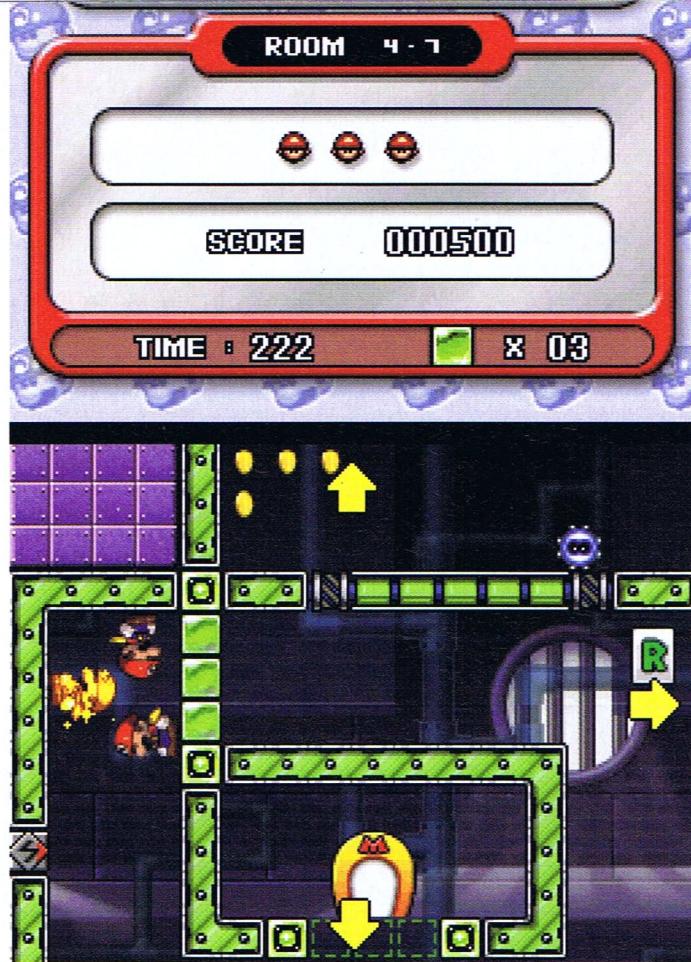
BUY

UP: Plenty of Halloween-style character • Rewarding gameplay • Great soundtrack

DOWN: Getting a bit too samey • Some sound samples are lame • A few new 3D enemy models are ugly

SCORE:

85



MARIO VS DONKEY KONG 2: MARCH OF THE MINIS

Is NG Editor March the leader of a vast mechanical army? John Dewhurst investigates.

INFO

WII

GENRE: Puzzle

DEVELOPER: Nintendo

RATING: G

PRICE: \$69.95

PLAYERS: 1-2 (wireless (2 cart play), demo (single cart))

IN BRIEF:

Nintendo's original arcade hit *Donkey Kong* provides the inspiration for a second puzzle-style game in this handheld series. Use the stylus to lead Mini-Marios past typically platformer hazards such as fire pits, great heights and scores of ape enemies. 10 different worlds with 9 levels and a Donkey Kong Boss Battle at the end of each. Gotta save 'em all!

Donkey Kong has snatched Pauline from a Grand Opening of Mario's toy store and headed to the roof. There's only one man for the job. Mario travels from ground floor to rooftop of the toy store, gathering Mini-Marios along the way to punish the silly monkey!

March of the Minis looks wonderful, using the DS' power to display good, clean and fun visuals. There are only a few video cutscenes throughout but all are full of cartoon vibrance and good humour. The style in gameplay is that clear, bold, stylised 2D Mario that we've known since *Super Mario World* – although the ape enemies owe something to (the band) Gorillaz in my humble opinion.

Each level features at least 2 Mini-Marios dotted around the place. Using only the stylus, players direct these contraptions around the platformed world. A swipe through Mini-Mario from left to right, sends tottering off to the right, from down to up makes him jump and a tap stops him in place. The stylus is also used to activate levers and switches and to add/remove squares around the place, altering the course of the

Mini-Marios. Of course, the stylus is capable of other, more unique, skills! Nintendo has done a fine job in streamlining the controls. By limiting stylus commands to horizontal and vertical strokes, they've minimised annoying rhubarbs of misdirection.

If it was just a matter of moving Marios from point A to B, the game would be a cinch – and many levels can be finished without too much thought. Except that you get a rating for each level based on your score: no star, Bronze, Silver or Gold star! The challenge is in moving them fast enough (a score for time), with a high level of skill (a score for combo-ing Mini-Marios through the exit) and with a minimum of stop-start interference to them (a Non-Stop Score).

Some levels need clever co-ordination of Mini-Marios to allow passage through. One Mini-Mario will need to jump on a switch to let another through a door, for example. At the harder levels, you need a Mini-Mario to act at a specific point, otherwise other Mini-Marios will be unable to reach the exit. Add in the scoring constraints and it becomes an engaging challenge of wits – a true puzzler! Boss battles have

Donkey Kong on the top screen, while you control a canon with the stylus on the touch screen. This is a humorous if mostly easy end to each of the floors of the game.

Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2 is a good change in style for the series, going for an indirect kind of control of the action. Its real strength is the creativity required in solving puzzles to beat high scores. It is a little too easy to get Gold Stars, so the Construction Zone where you can build your own levels and share them via WiFi is a welcome addition, for those who crave more challenging content. A happy, interesting, fun and challenging Mario puzzle title!

VERDICT

BUY

UP: Clever, rewarding puzzling • An exciting, interactive game world • Construction Zone for extended play

DOWN: Gold Stars too easy to gain • Very occasional control angst • Boss battles are too straightforward

SCORE:

86



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6

Jonathan Ikeda investigates whether this version of *International Superstar Soccer* is up to scratch...

INFO

Wii

GENRE: Sports

DEVELOPER: Konami

RATING: G

PRICE: \$79.95

PLAYERS: 1-4

IN BRIEF:

This is soccer on the DS as done by the experts – the *Pro Evolution Soccer* team. Played primarily via the d-pad and not without its faults, *Pro Evo 6* is nonetheless the best soccer game available for DS.



We haven't been enjoying football/soccer games with the d-pad since sometime before the arrival of *ISS 64* – the SNES version of *ISS DeLuxe* was probably our last significant d-pad kickabout. Yet here we are in 2007 (when even analogue control is passé, thanks to the Wii doing it again with the d-pad, because, you know, that's the only way to play *Pro Evolution Soccer 6* on the DS).

D-pad control isn't really a flaw as such. Naturally, being limited to eight directions of movement does affect the way DS *Pro Evo* plays – the midfield tends to become overcrowded (which leads to occasional slowdown), and running in diagonal lines makes it difficult to counter-attack successfully – but most of the time *Pro Evo 6* plays as fluidly as the mighty *ISS*. Through-balls are particularly effective in *PES 6*, cleverly exposing the gaps that appear in virtually all defences. (Even on the highest difficulty level here, opposition AI isn't much of a challenge for veteran *Pro Evo* players.)

In multiplayer, especially, when players' individual styles clash against each other, this version of *PES* is just as satisfying as any

other. Playing it via link-up with friends in the same room, *PES 6* has enough raw appeal to spark fights and rivalries that will last until you dare to put your DS into sleep mode.

It's only when you play *PES 6* in single-player, or online against someone from Iceland or India – when there's none of the sporting banter and friendly abuse of other players to be heard – that this game's flaws become apparent.

Sound effects in *PES 6* are hilariously bad, for example, while tackles seem to fly about like kung-fu kicks and the ball seems to float like a balloon when you punt it out of defence. And worse still, penalty shoot-outs have been reduced to a footballing equivalent of bingo. Maybe it was just desperation to implement some touchscreen features, but Konami has inexplicably replaced the precise d-pad control of penalty kicks with a silly stylus control method. The goal is divided into six squares (two rows of three), and you have to pick a square – if you're taking the kick, that's where the ball will go, and if you're in goal, that's where your keeper will dive. It's fun for the first time, and then it gets old.

But there is another use of the

touchscreen that we're really happy with: during each match, the main screen displays the action while the touchscreen shows an overhead diagram of players' positions on the pitch and their energy levels, as well as a gauge that indicates how much your team is attacking or defending. There are five grades, ranging from very defensive to all-out attack, which you can flick between with a tap of the screen. That is a neat feature. It's because of the conflicts rife in *PES 6*'s – its fine qualities, and its embarrassing own goals – that we'll recommend it with the following caveat: if you have no *Pro Evo*-loving friends, leave this game well alone.

VERDICT

TRY

UP: It's still possible to play beautiful football • Online is functional • Multiplayer is always great

DOWN: Penalty kicks are messed up • Slowdown in midfield and in the box • Awful sound effects

SCORE:

70

RAFA NADAL TENNIS

Gomes Chenbalin was once a gifted ball boy, until that terrible accident...

INFO

DS

GENRE: Tennis

DEVELOPER: Codemasters

RATING: G

PRICE: \$69.95

PLAYERS: 1-4



For every stylus-controlled DS game success story, there's a horror tale that makes you question the competence of some game developers. In *Rafa Nadal's Tennis*, it's an example of the latter case. Using the stylus to control the serve, ball-placement and returns is an exercise in extreme frustration – it's unintuitive and a struggle to play. How it got past the test department is any body's guess – it just feels a bit too broken.

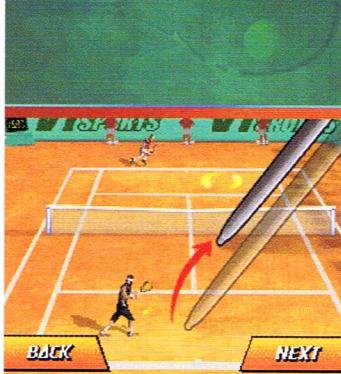
Good then, that you can keep the stylus stowed and rely on the old-fashioned D-pad and face buttons to control your budding tennis superstar instead. Because played this way, *Rafa Nadal* is really quite a fine game of tennis.

Rafa Nadal features all the sports games essentials – pick up and play

exhibition matches, a deeper career mode and multiplayer play. Career play and multiplayer are the real strengths of *RNT* however. Starting as an unknown you climb the ranks in career mode earning experience points to spend on strengthening your technique. It's not much more complicated than that, but there's enough depth there to keep you popping in the game card for more.

And with multiplayer, you can play a game of doubles with friends off a single card. Which is obviously

If we draw a line in an upward curve, we will send the ball right to the back of the court.



totally neat.

Overall, *Rafa Nadal Tennis* is a quality game of racquets and balls for the DS, particularly if you disregard the stylus controls. Just be aware that this is a serious tennis game without the frills. For a bit more spice you'll

VERDICT

TRY

UP: Good tennis play • Nice career mode • Multiplayer

DOW: Graphics are a bit light • Stylus play is rubbish

SCORE:

72

NEW YORK		Games	Points
Rafa Nadal	0	15	
Galen Palinkas	0	0	
Bruce Janeway	0	0	
Jeremy Larson	0	0	
	T1	0	
	T2	0	

IN BRIEF:

Rafa Nadal is tennis' number two seed, and the sponsoring star of this tennis game on DS. Unlike fantasy takes on sports which introduce new rules, abilities and obstacles (like the *Mario Tennis* series), *Rafa Nadal* is a straight-up tennis sim.

STAR TREK: TACTICAL ASSAULT

Gomes Chenbalin begs to be beamed up. ASAP.

INFO

DS

GENRE: Real

DEVELOPER: Bethesda Softworks

RATING: PG

PRICE: \$69.95

PLAYERS: 1-2

IN BRIEF:

Playing during the original *Star Trek* era (James T. Kirk et al) as a unknown Starfleet graduate, players boldly go where some people have gone before. A tactical action game, players control spacecraft like Enterprise-class vessels in battle in the first half of the game, then play as Klingons in the second.

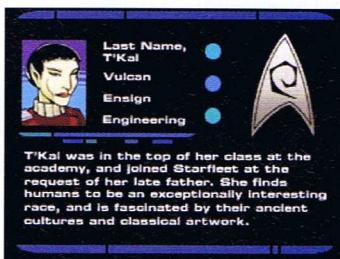
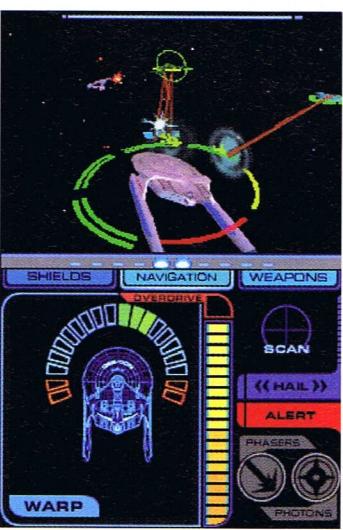
I really appreciate *Star Trek*. Not in a Trekkie manner by any stretch of the imagination, I should clarify. But I really dig the detail that the series goes into when it comes to its own universe – especially all the pseudo-science supporting it all. So much so that when you put the pimpness of Captain James T. Kirk and the ensuing drama he creates aside, the technology and the way it

handles is a big part of the show's charm.

And that's where *Tactical Assault* comes in. It's a strategic action game which is basically the *Star Trek* version of weapons-based battles in space. Where similar *Star Wars* games have featured fast dogfights in light spacecraft, *Tactical Assault* instead appropriately features lumbering Starfleet vessels which turn on a dime much like a freighter would when attempting a reverse park in Sydney harbour.

Played over a series of missions featuring a branching storyline, this *Star Trek* battle simulator keeps its Trekkiness by adding all manner of little flourishes around the act of combat itself. Before you fire the phasers or launch a single torpedo, you'll have warped to a location, hailed your potential opponent, issued some warnings and finally have lifted your vessels alert status from green to red.

Combat itself is a bit cumbersome but that's because Starfleet spacecraft handle like afore-mentioned mega tankers.



T'Kai was in the top of her class at the academy, and joined Starfleet at the request of her late father. She finds humans to be an exceptionally interesting race, and is fascinated by their ancient cultures and classical artwork.

That is, not well. Still, there's enough going on (in particular the storyline surround your actions and the ability to upgrade your ship) to keep *Star Trek* fans happy. All others should definitely try before they buy.

VERDICT

TRY

UP: Cool story • Innate Trekkiness • Wireless battles

DOW: Sluggish battles • Innate Trekkiness • Unintuitive controls

SCORE:

62

SPIDER-MAN BATTLE FOR NEW YORK

March Stepniki thinks this one's better than the last *Spider-Man* stinker on DS, but not by much...

INFO

DS

GENRE: Action

DEVELOPER: Torus Games

RATING: PG

PRICE: \$69.95

PLAYERS: 1

IN BRIEF:

Spider-Man Battle for New York is a side-scrolling action game starring the web-slinging wonder, Spider-Man. And the Green Goblin too – you play half of this game as Spidey's arch-enemy, allowing you to indulge your destructive side as well.

Spider-Man 2 – a title that was available at the DS' launch – felt particularly rushed. The limited touch controls were fine; the mind-numbingly boring level design, however, wasn't. Add to this a lack of general mission/level direction and unfairly difficult objective structure (finding a certain number of people to rescue in an absolutely warren-like maze where everything looks the same against a limited time deadline proved particularly frustrating). But hey – it made launch and it had Spider-Man innit and you know, well – these things happen, right?

So what's *Battle for New York*'s excuse then? Two years later we've got the same side-scrolling action game with slightly better graphics and some minor play tweaks. And it's JUST AS BAD AS THE FIRST ONE.

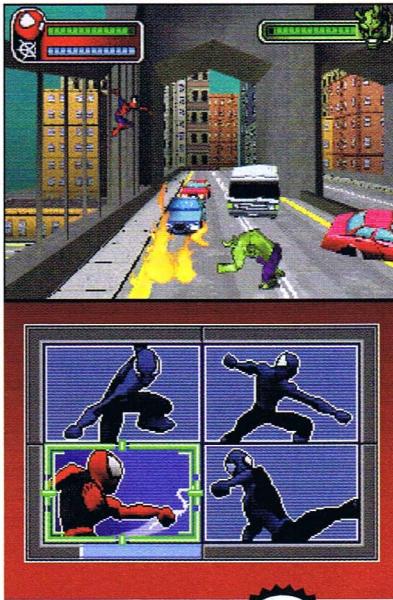
Oh, man – *Battle for New York* gets it wrong on so many levels. Where to start? It's got the same uninspired level design which makes it easy for you to get lost in. Objectives are again on the unfair side (particularly in regards to

mission timers), but at least there's a floating arrow pointing you to the next objective.

But it's the boss battles that take the cake. They're sadistically unfair. So first Spidey boss fight: enemy is strong. If he hits you just as you've started your attack (let's call it the "start attack" animation), your move is cancelled and he deals big damage. You do the same to him? He just totally smashes you in the face. How about the police helicopter that flies past every now and then and sprays bullets at you both? It takes a big chunk out of your health, while the boss falls over yet is unscathed. It's just stupid.

Oh look, sure – you earn points when you complete a level to increase Spidey's abilities and you even get to play as the bad guy but, you know, that's just not good enough to cover the many bad design choices in this game.

Watch the movies, take up gymnastics, hell – knit yourself a *Spider-Man* suit and wear it 'round your neighbourhood instead of playing this game. It's that bad.



VERDICT

AVOID

UP: Decent cel-shaded like graphics • Okayish dialogue • It's not totally unplayable

DOWN: Boring levels • Unfair boss battles • Feels amateurish

SCORE:

30

STAR WARS LETHAL ALLIANCE

Gomes Chenbalin auditioned once for the role of Chewbacca in the prequels...

INFO

DS

GENRE: Action

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft

RATING: PG

PRICE: \$69.95

PLAYERS: 1

IN BRIEF:

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... you know the drill. It's a *Star Wars* game, which means there's a 50% chance it will be terrible. A 3D action shooter which switches you between a humanoid character and a droid, this one falls on the wrong side of that 50-50 split.

Lethal Alliance is a 3D action/shooter set in the *Star Wars* universe. So the alliance is between a Twi'lek spy/hunter and a droid and it's just before *Episode IV* and....zzzzzzzzzzzzz. Ungh! Wait – here's a scoop. This game is BAD.

This is the sort of game that babies you through virtually every step of the way as if you had the word imbecile tattooed on your forehead. This giant tunnel not enough of a guide for you to progress to the next area? Fine – just follow the giant blue arrows on the ground instead.

See that enemy standing on the balcony shooting at you? Shoot it. That is, because the developers animated this ugly low-resolution collection of textures – you had

bleedin' better take the time to engage with it.

No, seriously. While the unimaginatively laid-out levels are forgivable, combat isn't. It's mostly boring, but it's the way it forces you to fight which offends. Just in case you try anything fancy and in-character – like, say, running/escaping to the next area instead of staying for the ensuing fire-fight (don't worry about being bested easily – this is the Empire you're up against and they make genes for the inability to aim a firearm a contract-crucial requisite for joining), the game fences you until you dispose of the enemy threat. Literally. The sound of random doorway X to the random area Y opening magically is the reward for besting a handful of nefarious thugs. This is just dull and lazy game design, folks.

So the formula runs like this: enter area, shoot enemies, go through newly opened door. There's some cool stylus-based puzzles every now and then but mostly you've got a solid snooze-a-thon on offer here.

Hey – this is the DS. Give us something innovative and fun like



a *Star Wars*-flavoured *Nintendogs* except that you're building droids instead. You could build them from various parts and tweak them and see what they do. Damn, now that would be a cool *Star Wars* game.

VERDICT

AVOID

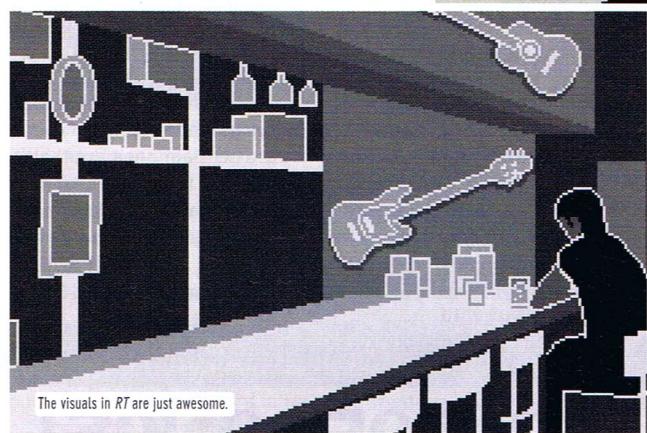
UP: John Williams • Touch-based puzzles • It's *Star Wars*?

DOWN: Harsh graphics • Dull level design • Crappy combat

SCORE:

42





RHYTHM TENGOKU JAPANESE IMPORT REVIEW

Dan Staines always likes a good - *snigger* - BEAT-em-up

INFO

WII

GENRE: Rhythm

DEVELOPER: Nintendo R&D 1

RATING: N/A

PRICE: N/A

PLAYERS: 1

IN BRIEF:

Made by the same team responsible for *WarioWare*, *RT* is a unique and stylish rhythm game in which the goal is to complete a series of mini-games by tapping buttons in time with music and visual cues. Think a cross between *WW* and *Elite Beat Agents*.



The appeal of *Rhythm Tengoku* is immediate and universal.

It's a rhythm game where the "songs" are in fact an eclectic collection of bizarre music-based mini-games. It's a simple and elegant idea executed with effortless finesse. In short, it's exactly what you'd expect a good Nintendo game to be.

JUST BEAT IT

Before you begin the game proper, you're first required to undergo a Rhythm Check - a disconcertingly clinical assessment of your ability to keep a beat. In my case, this turned out to be a depressing confirmation of my complete lack of musical talent. See, what happens is that you're supposed to press the A-button in time with a series of increasingly complex beats while a weird printing machine records your accuracy on a line-graph. If your line is close to the centre of the graph and relatively straight, then you're doing well - if it zigzags all over the place, you're doing poorly.

My line was a veritable mountain-range of failure. And you know what the worst part is? It turned out to be a pretty accurate summary of my overall competence at *RT*. I've heard people say that this game is

easy; those people are either liars or professionally trained drummers. On average, I would've failed each of the beginner-level mini-games at least five or six times. The

BEGINNER-LEVEL mini-games, for God's sake. Once again, this may be because I - as zombie James Brown might say - don't got no funk, but it could also be that the game is actually quite difficult. In any case, there's no doubt that it's punishingly strict - especially when compared to games like *Guitar Hero* and *Donkey Konga*. (Both of which I rule at, by the way.)

PAN PAN!

But even when you're failing miserably at it, *RT* is still incredibly good fun. The art is stylish and vibrantly original, the music is catchy and surprisingly polished given the GBA's meager sound hardware, and the mini-games - oh man, the mini-games are great. They're so genuinely good-natured and eccentric that it's impossible not to love them. For example, the second mini-game you play has you plucking chin-hairs off what look like giant smiling onions in-time with up-tempo Arabic melodies. That probably doesn't sound so great on paper, but in-game, it's fantastic. I couldn't tell you why

exactly - it just is. Like *WarioWare*, much of *RT*'s appeal defies explanation. It's just FUN. Lots and lots of FUN.

Now, as you've probably gathered from the title, screenshots, and giant IMPORT REVIEW text up the top of the page, *RT* is only available in Japan at the moment. Whether or not it'll ever get a Western release remains a mystery, and so for now, I strongly recommend that you import it. Yes, it's all in Japanese, but it's easy enough to understand what's happening without knowing what the text says. Plus there's a good chance that it might not ever come out here, which means you would miss out on playing it. And that would be a terrible shame, because this is a truly great GBA game.

VERDICT

BUY

UP: A great idea elegantly executed: wonderful art style • neato music

DOWN: A little bit punishing • kind of short

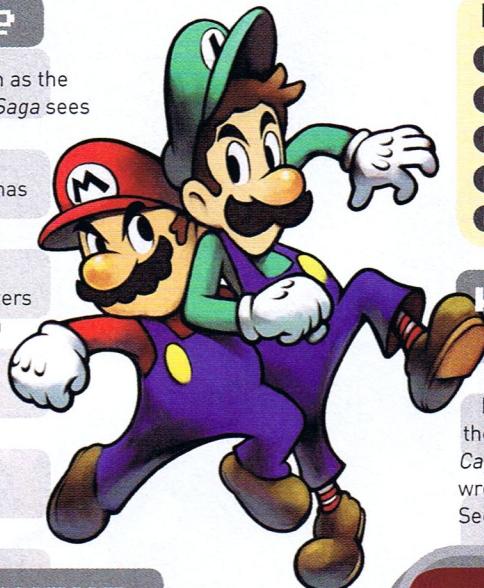
SCORE:

90

THE VAULT: Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga

WHAT IS IT?

An RPG in roughly the same vein as the *Paper Mario* games, *Superstar Saga* sees the Mario brothers travel to the Bean Bean Kingdom to rescue Princess Peach's voice – which has been stolen and replaced with explosives. So far as gameplay goes, standout features include the ability to control two characters at once (i.e. Mario & Luigi) and a unique battle system in which timed button-presses play an important role in determining the amount of damage you deal and receive. Also, it had Fawful – who is easily the best villain in any *Mario* game ever.



Details

PLATFORM:	GBA
GENRE:	RPG
RELEASED:	21/11/2003
RRP:	\$69.95
RARITY:	KIND OF RARE



WHY BUY IT?

There are so many reasons to love this game that I'm not even sure I've got the space to list them all. The main ones are that it's hilariously funny, effortlessly charismatic, and brilliantly designed the whole way through. People will sometimes say that *Zelda: Minish Cap* is the best RPG you can buy for GBA, but they're so COMPLETELY wrong that it just makes me want to BASH THEIR STUPID HEADS IN. See, SS isn't just the best RPG on GBA – it's the best GAME on GBA.

DEFINING MOMENT

FAWFUL: I am the great Cackletta's most best pupil, who is named Fawful! I am here, laughing at you! If you are giving us the chase, just to get your silly princess's voice, then you are idiots of foolishness! Princess Peach's sweet voice will soon be the bread that makes the sandwich of Cackletta's desires! And this battle shall be the delicious mustard on that bread! The mustard of your doom!

BACK PACK

Neato boxart from ages ago

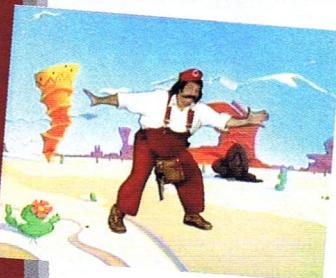
Before Solid Snake had his trademark mullet and permanent five-o'clock shadow, he looked a LOT like Michael Biehn – a B-list actor from the 1980's who starred in *The Terminator* and *Aliens* as well as numerous low-budget teledramas nobody gives a crap about. Check out the comparison shot there: see the likeness? You should, because they're almost identical. Honestly, we're surprised that Michael Biehn hasn't sued Konami by now. (That's what they do in

America, isn't it? Sue people. That's the impression I get from watching television.)



HEY PAESANOS!

It's the *Super Mario Bros. Super Show!*



Once upon a time, the Mario Bros. had their own television show – the *Super Mario Bros. Super Show*. At the beginning of each episode, there was a live action sequence in which Mario (played by an ex-wrestler) and Luigi (played by a skeevy derelict) would sit around their apartment and wait for minor celebrities to come over and plug their new movie/album/action-figure/whatever. Next they'd play a crappy *Mario* cartoon (or sometimes a *Zelda* one), then another live-action sequence in which Mario would call Luigi a disgusting failure, and finally the show would end with a frank and heartfelt discussion about the dangers of heroin addiction. Anyway, the reason I mention all this is because the show had a great theme tune and I'd like to share it with you. It goes like this: Hey, paesanos! It's The Super Mario Brothers Super Show!

We're the Mario Brothers, and plumbing's our game, we're not like the others who get all the fame.

If your sink is in trouble, you can call us on the double, we're faster than the others, you'll be hooked on the Brothers!

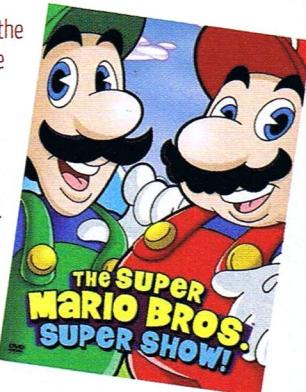
Uh! (Crotch thrust) You'll be hooked on the Brothers Gimme gimme, gimme gimme!

You're in for a treat, so hang on to your seat. Get ready for adventures and remarkable feats.

You'll meet Koopas, the Troopas, the Princess, and the others, hangin' with the plumbers, you'll be hooked on the Brothers!

To the brink! Uh! (Crotch thrust) Uh! (Crotch thrust)

Huh, huh, I said hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hooked on the Brothers!



THIS MONTH IN NINTENDO HISTORY

March 19, 1994: Super Metroid is released for SNES in Japan. Hailed by critics as a masterpiece (and still considered by many to be the pinnacle of the series), it goes on to sell 1.4 million units worldwide, making it one of the most successful SNES games ever released.



March 11, 1995: Chrono Trigger is released for SNES in Japan. A massive project developed by a so-called "Dream Team" of talented developers, artists, and musicians, it sells 2 million copies within 2 months of its release and goes on to become one of the most beloved Japanese RPGs ever made. (And if Nintendo doesn't release it for the VC here, we will kidnap and murder their PR representative. You hear that, Vispi? Make it happen – OR ELSE.)



March 1, 1997: The Nintendo 64 is released in Australia. Sold at \$399 and home to

classic titles such as Mario 64 and Goldeneye, the machine quickly became a commercial success, even though it failed to recapture the market-share lost to the PlayStation. To date, the N64 has sold approximately 32 million units worldwide.

March 24, 2003: The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker is released for GameCube in North America. With over 560,000 pre-orders, it still stands as the most pre-ordered game in Nintendo history. (Dan says it was tedious, but Dan is a joyless, spiteful goblin – so who cares what he thinks?)

It's Johnny Turbo

He's a fat guy! But also a superhero! Apparently!

What you see here are excerpts from a series of comic-style ads for an abortive CD-based console system called the TurboDuo. Produced in 1992, the ads chronicle the adventures of Johnny Turbo: a superhero that looks like Peter Jackson would if he were still fat and bought all his clothes from an army surplus store. Whereas most superheroes concentrate on saving the world from villainy, Johnny Turbo's goal was to ensure the success of TurboDuo by randomly attacking anyone responsible for selling competitor products. Check it out:

In the first issue, Johnny Turbo delivers his unique brand of corporate justice by showing up at a department store and PUNCHING, KICKING, and SHOOTING anyone who happens to be selling consoles other than the TurboDuo. (Incidentally, this outrageous behaviour was later emulated in reality by Sony's Ken Kutaragi during the launch of the PS3.)



The second instalment sees Turbo go from random violence to organised genocide. Look at him there, standing over a pile of corpses while beating another man to death with his bare hands. Look at his face, twisted in an expression of pure animal rage – the man is clearly completely nuts.

In a turn for the bizarre, the third instalment of Johnny Turbo sees Tony – Johnny's nerdy sidekick – dragged into a surrealistic dream world full of TurboDuo propaganda and oblique homosexual imagery. EXTRA CREDIT CHALLENGE: See how many examples of the latter you can spot in the last frame of the present page. We count at least three. (Four if you include the fish.)



The

Castlevania®
Series



Generally, the people who have never heard of *Castlevania*, creatures I am always surprised to meet, come across the game as a friend is playing it on SP or DS and they think, 'Hehe, great music...'. It's guaranteed to happen. If they're allowed to actually play, it's a few minutes of being surprised that such a retro-looking game comes on such a new system. And what about the strange smoothness of the graphics? Or the neatly reactive controls? And then, surprise at the release date. '2003?! No way!' they exclaim. And you know what comes next.

That's right! 8 SOLID HOURS OF IMPULSIVE PLATFORM-CASTLE EXPLORING AND GENERAL EVIL ELIMINATION. It happens to the best of us. At that

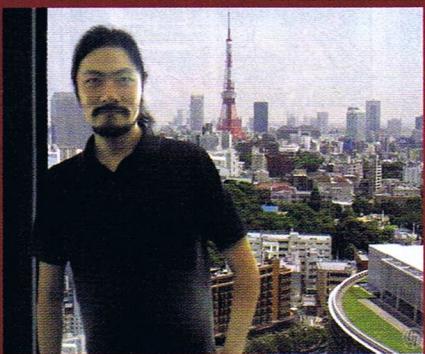
point, all you can do is hang around until the urge to whip things and jump around a lot has died down to below critical mass. Because there is no easy route out of this addiction, no matter how many times you tell yourself that a 2D platformer shouldn't have this effect on a mature gamer, despite all attempts to logic your way out of it along the lines of, "Okay, I've been trying to jump over this pit for three days now, it's getting a bit silly...". Nothing works. That's because the chaps at Konami know what they're doing. They can punch out thumb-destroying Belmont and Samus adventures faster than you can say 'shady deal with arthritis cream manufacturers'. And who's surprised? They've been doing it for 20 years! Yep, they've got considerable history, what with the first *Castlevania* released in 1986. Although, it isn't the first *Castlevania* in terms of official

chronology. *Lament of Innocence*, released in 2003, predates all the games as it is set in 1093. The real life first game, *Castlevania*, is actually set in 1691 and is the seventh game in the chronological order of things. It starred the legendary Simon Belmont, who went on to smite ad nauseum in a further 4 other slightly crappy games (well, the remake of original with extra features, *Super Castlevania IV*, is pretty damn good). The timeline is confused due to a rearrangement at Konami, where Koji Igarashi decided to swap things around so they'd make more sense. I'm very sorry, Igarashi-san, but I'm still confused. It's hard enough trying to keep up with what happens in the game, but then you have the legions of fans and their wild theories to take into account. Is Soleyu really Christopher's father? Or is there a two century gap in their date of

Metrovania

Although they are iconic platform games, *Castlevania* games are essentially one giant puzzle. You must explore the Castle Dracula unlocking powers and finding items that will allow you to reach the evil at its core and banish it. These elements could qualify the series as adventure if the environments themselves weren't so static. Sure there are the foul denizens of the castle to slay, but the way combat plays out doesn't warrant it a place in the action genre. Don't get me started on why it isn't an RPG.

What is pretty crucial is how the series changed with *Symphony of the Night* on PS2. With new producer Koji Igarashi on board, the series morphed from linear side-scroller in previous *Castlevanias* to a sprawling exploration of Dracula's castle; a game where you re-visit areas with new abilities to unlock further sections of Vlad's domain. The system was lifted from the brilliant *Super Metroid* on SNES, hence the coining of the phrase *Metrovania* for any game in the series using it.





Fixgelling

Most PAL released *Castlevania* games are still available on eBay and other second-hand outlets, and some will be harder to find than others. There are currently available *Castlevania* games from retail:

- † *Castlevania Classic* (NES version) - GBA
- † *Castlevania Double Pack* (featuring *Harmony of Dissonance* and *Aria of Sorrow*) - GBA
- † *Castlevania Dawn of Sorrow* - DS
- † *Castlevania Portrait of Ruin* - DS
- † *Super Castlevania IV* - SNES
- † *Castlevania Curse of Darkness* - PS2, Xbox



No. 2

No matter how often you go through it on your way to another part of the castle, there is ALWAYS at least one room in which something ALWAYS hits you. Even at later levels, when you can really just plow through the early stages, some bastard skeleton always comes up and smacks you with its leg, doing all of 1 damage and hurting your feelings considerably. GAH!



No. 3

Castlevania, along with its unofficial sister franchise *Metroid*, are possessed of some of the most aggravating bosses of all time. The sort where you can't even begin to figure out their pattern of attack cos they kill you with the first one. I don't think I've ever screamed so loud or thrown my SP so hard as when fighting that horrible flying demon thingy in *Symphony of Night*. And then I found the trick to it! Be four levels higher! /cry

No. 1

Dracula! The Eternal! The Great! The Evil! The Unarguably Stupid! The lord of all evil is beaten by mortals, EVERY TIME, even with 100 years of planning time. Why doesn't he just die and stay dead? Hasn't someone thought of shooting his ashes into the sun? It's fairly unlikely that a mad cult

is gonna be able to retrieve them from there and resurrect him AGAIN. Not without some SERIOUS heat resistant pants.



No. 4

Ohhhh those crazy Belmonts. How their dialogue is humorously bad! It's a *Castlevania* tradition, to have many cut scenes in which such



the zombies squelch and the protagonist flies into the air and bellows, 'AAAARRRrrrrgggh....!'. For me, these vocal manifestations of amusing game-pain are an integral part of any *Castlevania* game, as much as medusas or the 'can't get in here yet' shiny door early in the game that beguiles you with its general shininess until practically the end.

No. 5

GWAAAAAAArggggh....h...! *Castlevania* is generally loved and admired for its excellent dying groans. The bosses wail, the women-monsters howl (suggestive even in agonising whip-death),



No. 6

Evil Bad Guy Rule #1: Arrogance and losing go hand in hand. So, for the purposes of your new career as a Gaming Supervillain, feel free to go about boasting of your absolute, definite, undefeatability THIS time. It's how good guys know who to kill.

No. 7

Evil Bad Guy Rule #2: If you need a virginal sacrifice, make sure she has a boyfriend/childhood friend/father to rescue her. Otherwise

Family Matters

you won't have a game, just a successful dinner party. And don't worry, no matter how pitiful and mortal these rescuers may appear, they'll kill you in about 20 gaming hours (unless they leave the console unpopped on a cupboard while they go have lunch. /cry).

Well, my spidey-sense is telling me I should stop muttering away like a disgruntled spouse and get some serious ANTICIPATION in. Yes, I am speaking of *Portrait of Ruin*, which I am anticipating as quite a different gaming experience from the recent trend in *Castlevania* games, i.e. one man show, magic coming from items, not varying from the good old 'kill Dracula' routine. No, in *Portrait of Ruin*, your TWO characters must do battle, with various side-characters also controllable, and this time they're killing CLOWNS. Wait, er, by clowns I mean the evil cult who wants to bring Dracula back. So, not too much originality there, then. But gameplay has changed considerably, making for a reasonable amount of challenge and 'whoa, it's a motorcycle'. What an improvement from the general suckiness of the 3D PS *Castlevania*, which despite all the scientific evidence pointing towards a 3D PS *Castlevania* being incapable of sucking, sucked. Sigh. Enough of this incessant babble! I must advance to Dracula's castle, wherein to defeat the evil lord himself, and his whole army of minions! Again! *Aria of Sorrow* replay, you say? Damn straight. Anyway, if you haven't already, turn to page 54 to read what we thought of *Portrait of Ruin*. And then write in and ask March WHY THE HELL HE DIDN'T GIVE ME THE REVIEW!

*Pout.

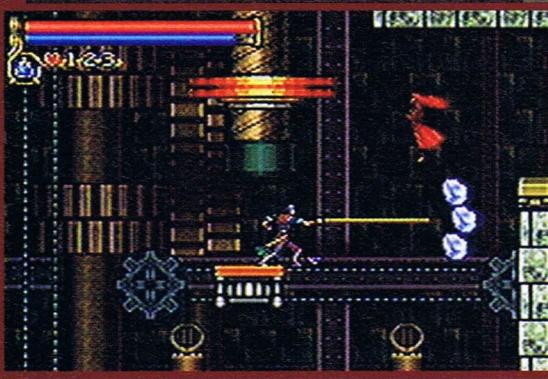
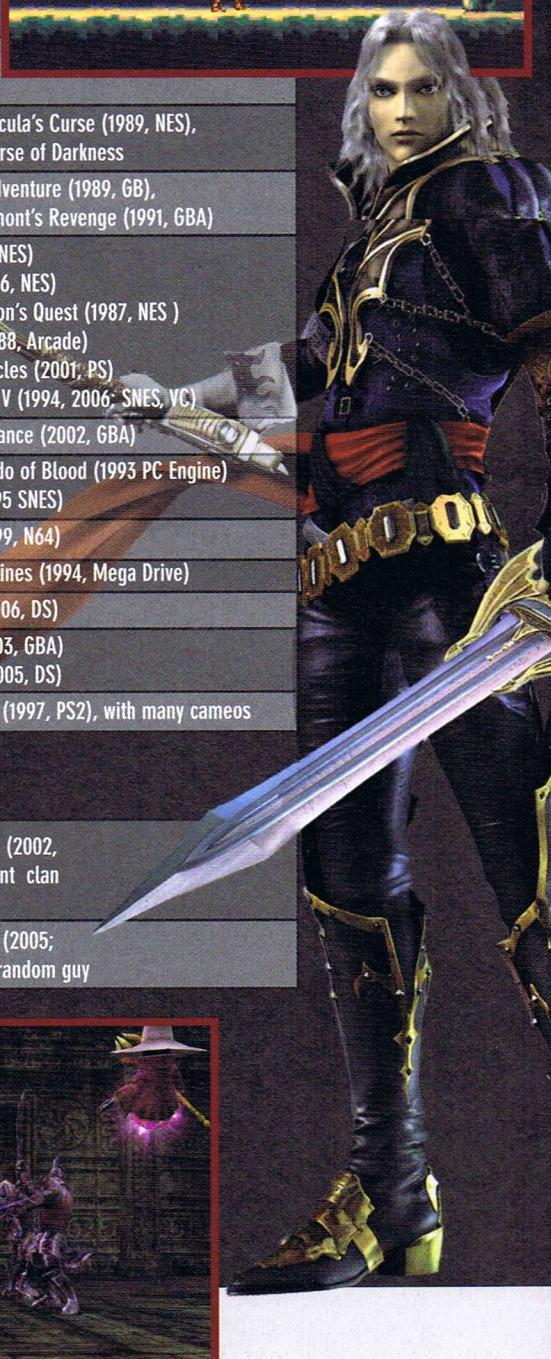
As for me, I could be considered a soft-core, die-easy fan. I've played many of the games to completion, and enjoyed the vast majority of that time, but I cannot claim to have any brilliant understanding of the *Castlevania* timeline. The games were released in a completely different order to the timeline of events they officially follow. Any number of people may or may not have fathered just about everyone else. Put this over the course of a millennium, with random side games and related titles popping up as an excuse for some Dracula love, and it's JUST INSANE. So, here it is, our best attempt at a succinct *Castlevania* comparative timeline. If I've gotten some things, or even many things, wrong, feel free to laugh at me.

Castlevania Protagonist (and significant others) List and Game Timeline: Confusion Comparison

Leon Belmont (1094)	Lament of Innocence (PS2, 2003)
Sonia Belmont (1450)	Castlevania: Legends (1997)
Trevor Belmont (1476-1479)	Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse (1989, NES), with a cameo in Curse of Darkness
Christopher Belmont (1576-1591)	Castlevania: The Adventure (1989, GB), Castlevania 2: Belmont's Revenge (1991, GBA)
Simon Belmont (1691-1698)	Castlevania (1986, NES) Vampire Killer (1986, NES) Castlevania II: Simon's Quest (1987, NES) Haunted Castle (1988, Arcade) Castlevania Chronicles (2001, PS) Super Castlevania IV (1994, 2006, SNES, VC)
Juste Belmont (1748)	Harmony of Dissonance (2002, GBA)
Richter Belmont (1792-1797)	Castlevania X: Rondo of Blood (1993 PC Engine) Vampire's Kiss (1995 SNES)
Reinhardt Schneider (1852)	Castlevania 64 (1999, N64)
John Morris (1917)	Castlevania: Bloodlines (1994, Mega Drive)
Jonathan Morris, Charlotte Aulin (1944)	Portrait of Ruin (2006, DS)
Soma Cruz (2035)	Aria of Sorrow (2003, GBA) Dawn of Sorrow (2005, DS)
Alucard (yikes)	Symphony of Night (1997, PS2), with many cameos

Other Notables:

Nathan Graves (?)	Circle of the Moon (2002, GBA), not a Belmont clan member
Hector (1479)	Curse of Darkness (2005; PS2, Xbox), some random guy

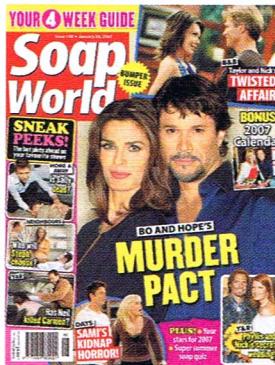
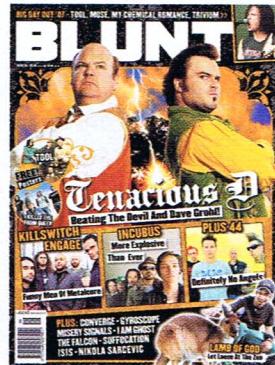


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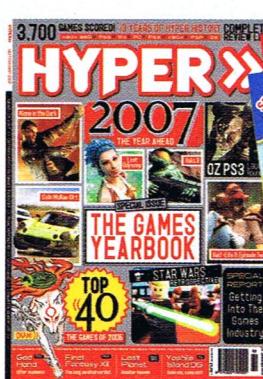
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GAME AID

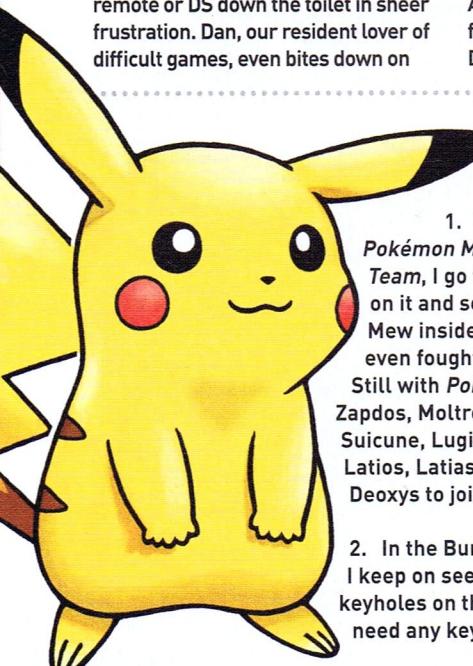
CHEATS, TIPS AND GREAT GAMING ADVICE



Ahh, Super Happy Gaming Fun! It's not all rainbows and lollipops though. For every fresh-faced twenty-something clad in white sitting on a designer couch in a dream loft apartment absolutely pwning a game on Wii (ahh, gotta love those lifestyle shots), there's a frantic gamer ready to flush their Wii remote or DS down the toilet in sheer frustration. Dan, our resident lover of difficult games, even bites down on

harmless and defenceless pieces of furniture when he gets stuck. Think of the furniture. Dear god, think of the poor furniture.

This section, then, is for any gamer tempted to sink their teeth into their couch in frustration. Aside from tips, cheats and guides to help get you the most out of the games in question, you'll find that Game Aid also tends to specific requests for help in a game. Isn't that spiffy? Damn straight it is.



DUNGEONS OF MYSTERY - PART I

Dear Nintendo Gamer,

1. When I turn on my GBA and play *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Red Rescue Team*, I go to the Continue section and click on it and see a little box with the picture of Mew inside. Why is it there when I haven't even fought Mew yet?

Still with *Pokémon*, how do you get Articuno, Zapdos, Moltres, Mewtwo, Mew, Raikou, Entei, Suicune, Lugia, Ho-Oh, Celebi, The Regis, Latios, Latias, Groudon, Rayquaza, Jirachi and Deoxys to join your team? I've only got Kyogre.

2. In the Buried Relic on floors 45, 70 and 80 I keep on seeing these concrete walls with keyholes on them, what are they for and do you need any keys/items to open them?

3. Finally, in *Lego Star Wars: The Video Game*, in episode one, chapter two I can only get up to the place with the waterfalls after you save Jar-Jar Binks. I kept on going through, used the force on the gears and kept on going until I saw this dark hole. I tried to walk through, but it didn't work. Do you have to hit the target on the tree near the start? Also, how do you hit the target when there is nobody to hit it with, because the only characters you can be is Qui-Gon Jinn, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Jar-Jar Binks.

Billy Sokoleski

Are you up to the Buried Relic mission, Billy? If you haven't fought Mew yet, you will soon! First, you need to battle Regirock, Regice and Registeel, who can be found on the 15th, 25th and 35th floors of the dungeon, respectively. The Regis will drop the Rock Parts, Ice Parts and Steel Parts. These items combine to make the Music Box. If

CONTACT US

Send any questions (and even special requests) to:

Game Aid

Nintendo Gamer
78 Renwick Street
Redfern NSW 2016

Or email us: game_aid_nongamer@hotmail.com



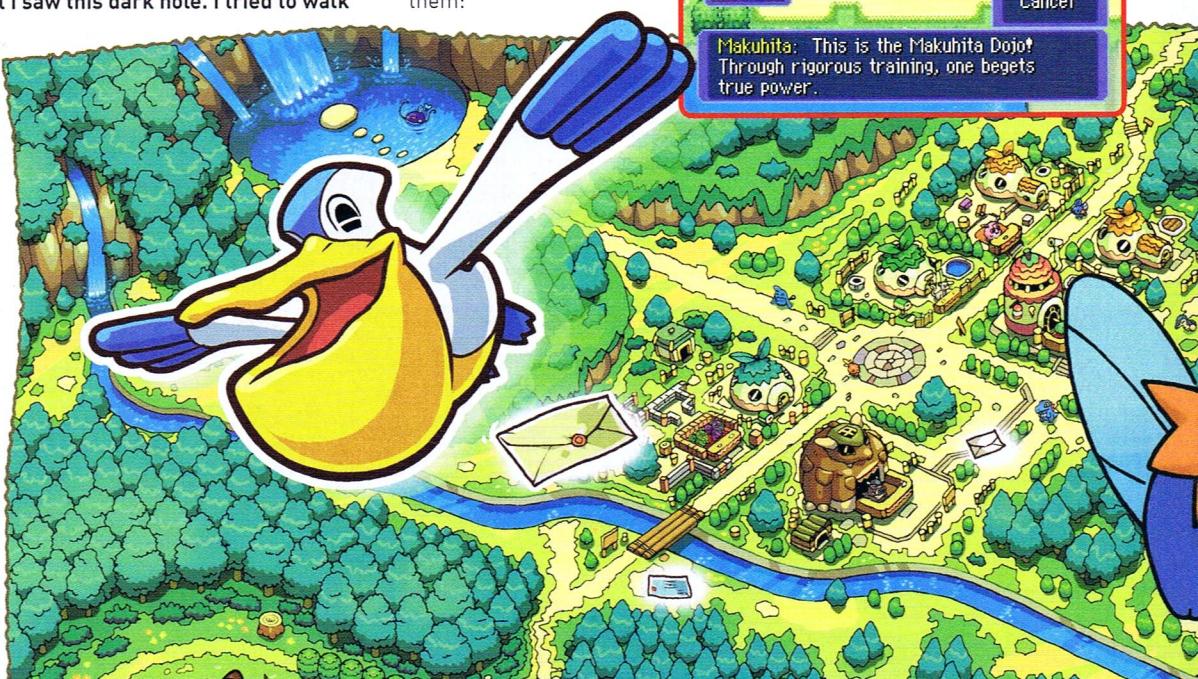
Mudkip: Anyways...
Today marks the start of our rescue team!
Let's do our best always!

you have the Music Box in your inventory while walking around floor 36 and beyond, you might just attract Mew's attention. You'll need to purchase the Ancient Relic and Final Island Friend Areas if you want to successfully recruit the Regi trio and Mew.

You'll need to make sure you have the right Friend Areas for the other legendary pokémon you want to recruit, too. Some legendary pokémon unlock their own Friend Areas automatically (Ho-Oh and Lugia, for example) but you'll need to purchase Sacred Field, Cryptic Cave and Southern Island from Wigglytuff. When you're out on a recruitment drive, make sure you have plenty of space in your party – some of these pokémon are big! Also bear in mind that you'll need to finish the game before you can recruit most of the legendary pokémon. Here's where you'll find them:



Makuhita: This is the Makuhita Dojo! Through rigorous training, one begets true power.



BOSS OF THE MONTH: ASTARTE

CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN (DS)

You'll face the ravishing and ruthless Astarte at the end of Sandy Grave. Make sure you come prepared! If you haven't already picked up 1,000 Blades, go back and grab it, five squares above the bottommost teleporter in the area. The Hercules Ring will also come in handy, as it will stop you getting hit while you're in the middle of an attack. Battle some Minotaurs to pick one up.

Devastatingly beautiful though Astarte may be, don't let Jonathan become yet another victim of her deadly charm – specifically, her deadly Charm attack! The heart-shaped projectiles will cause Jonathan to turn against Charlotte, attacking

Articuno: In the centre of Frozen Trees Forest, on the 5th floor.
Zapdos: On top of Thudcrash Mountain, on the 3rd floor.
Moltres: On top of Fire Mountain, on the 3rd floor.
Mewtwo: The 99th floor of Western Cave, in the Cryptic Cave Friend Area. Go alone.
Raikou: When you've purchased the Sacred Field Friend Area, you'll be able to find this legendary dog in the Lightning Field section – but only when you come back after your first visit.
Entei: Also in the Sacred Field. Look in the Fiery Field this time.
Suicune: In the Northwind Field part of the Sacred Field.
Lugia: On the 99th floor of the Silver Trench.
Ho-Oh: On top of Mt. Faraway (40th floor).
Celebi: On the 99th floor of the Pure Forest. Celebi will befriend you without a battle. How nice!
Latios: At the top of the Northern Range in the Southern Island Friend Area. He'll join you when you agree to help him on a rescue mission of his own.

her relentlessly. Your only option in this situation is to kill Jonathon and fight with Charlotte solo for a while. Astarte's other attacks are somewhat less devastating. Escape her green lightning bolts by dashing away as she begins the attack. You can dodge the tornadoes with a vertical double jump.

Astarte's attacks shouldn't be too much of a problem for you if you have 1,000 Blades in your arsenal. Whenever your meter is full, wait until Astarte is in front of you, at ground level and just off the screen. Hit her with 1,000 Blades for massive damage!



Latias: Rescue Latios' sister from the 25th floor of Pitfall Valley (in the Southern Island Friend Area) and she'll be only too happy to join your party. Latios will become a permanent team member, too.
Groudon: In the deepest part of the Magma Caverns. Be prepared for a tough battle!

Rayquaza: At the top of the Sky Tower Again, you're in for one hell of a difficult fight.

Jirachi: On the 99th floor of Wish Cave, in the Mt Moonview Friend Area.

Deoxys: On the 20th floor of Meteor Cave. Be warned – this is no ordinary dungeon. You'll need to defeat the Deoxys mirage on every floor before you can find the stairs!

Now, as for those keyholes in the Buried Relic – they have HM's behind them. Specifically, you'll find Rock Smash on the 45th floor, Flash on the 70th floor and Cut on the 80th. You can find keys in Solar Cave, Desert Region and Western Cave.

And, finally, your *Lego Star Wars* predicament: The dark spot is just a hollow in the rock wall, so stop trying to walk through it! You should come up to a big hole in the floor as you move towards the right. When you reach the gap, there are some blocks that you can move with the Force to form a bridge. Don't worry about that target near the beginning of the level for now. You can come back with a blaster character in Free Play mode.

FANTASTICALLY STUMPED

Dear *Nintendo Gamer*,
I'm having trouble in the second part of *Final Fantasy II* (GBA).




GAME AID


After you get Minwu, Scott, Josef and Ricard, and you talk to Cid about Jade Passage and he says: "Find out what the blazes is going on and where we are and how we got here." What do I do?

Please help me!
Matthew Sugar

If I'm not mistaken, this is the part of the game when poor old Cid has just given you permission to use his airship. Sail over to Poft and pick it up. When you're done exploring and stocking up on items (Hint: this is a very good idea!) go back to Flynn Castle and talk to Hilda to find out about Jade Passage.

DUNGEONS OF MYSTERY – PART II

Dear *Nintendo Gamer*,
I have some questions for you for *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Blue Rescue Team*.

I've found out that if you stay in a floor a message says

'Something's stirring....' and then eventually you get blown away if you stay on the floor long enough and you fail the dungeon. Who is doing it?

Nathan Vindis

Nobody knows! Perhaps that's what makes these pokémon dungeons so darn mysterious... At any rate, you'll never find out who or what is blowing you away, so don't waste your time (and items!) hanging around out of curiosity. Find those stairs, quick smart!

USE THE STYLUS, LUKE!

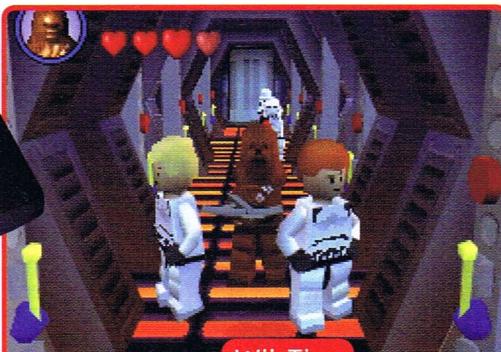
Dear *Nintendo Gamer*,
I'm having trouble with *Lego Star Wars II* for DS.

On the Escape from Echo Base level, at the end where you go to the ship there is a hole that I go through to get the last Mini-Kit. I have the Mini-Kit detector but I just can't get through! I use the mini robot on wheels and I still can't! Is this a glitch or do you have to do something?

I can't access the last chapter of Episode 6 in free play and there is a metal door on the ground. When you enter the door is that the last chapter? If so, how do you bust through it?

Finally, are there gold bricks and Lego City in the DS version?
Shane Luckman, VIC

You'll need C-3PO and R2-D2 to pick up that last kit. Just before you get into the Millennium Falcon (you'll be standing on some platforms above it), leave the room the way you came in. Then, use C-3PO to go through the door leading to the outside. You should see a force field that you can switch off with R2-D2. Deactivate the force field and go back to where you can push a box through into the new area to reveal the Mini-Kit.



Wii Tips

RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS

BONUS TIME!

Earn big points in Score Mode and reap the rabbidy rewards:

5000 Points	Artwork 1
9000 Points	Bunnies Don't Like Taking a Bath
21000 Points	Bunnies Don't Do Vacuum Cleaning
48000 Points	Bunnies Can't Infiltrate a Games Convention
57000 Points	French Bastille Day
84000 Points	Bunnies Can't Cook Eggs
93000 Points	Artwork 2
111000 Points	Bunnies Never Close Doors
138000 Points	Bunnies Can't Play Soccer
165000 Points	US Independence Day



MARIO HOOPS**CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES**

Here's how to add some new faces to your team:

Paratroopa	Finish Mushroom Cup (Bronze prize)
Dixie Kong	Finish Flower Cup (Bronze prize)
Bowser	Finish Star Cup (Bronze prize)
Moogle	Finish Star Cup (Silver prize)
Ninja	Finish Rainbow Cup (Bronze prize)
White Mage	Finish Rainbow Cup (Silver prize)
Black Mage	Finish Rainbow Cup (Gold prize)
Birdo	Finish Hard Mushroom Cup (Bronze prize)
Boo	Finish Hard Flower Cup (Bronze prize)
Flyguy	Finish Hard Star Cup (Bronze prize)



To unlock the last level (Destiny) in Free Play, you'll need to finish it in Story Mode first. That means defeating the Emperor. If you're stuck on the Heart of the Death Star level, make sure you shoot all the little control panels on the wall to open up the doors. Be aware that you can't actually finish the last level in Free Play. Nothing you can do about that, it's just a bug in the game.

No gold bricks in the DS version, but you can unlock "Sandbox" mode by achieving "True Jedi" status on all levels.

O-POKÉ-TICAL ILLUSIONS

Dear *Nintendo Gamer*,

I'm having a lot of trouble with *Pokémon Emerald* on GBA.

First, what is the Mirage Tower?

On the second storey of the Mirage Tower, what is the ladder for? I can't get to it because I keep falling through the floor!

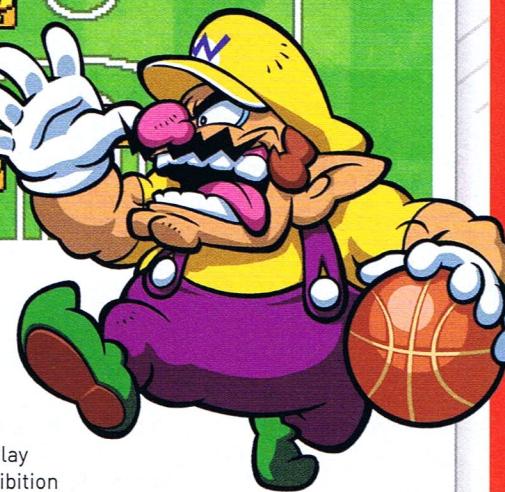
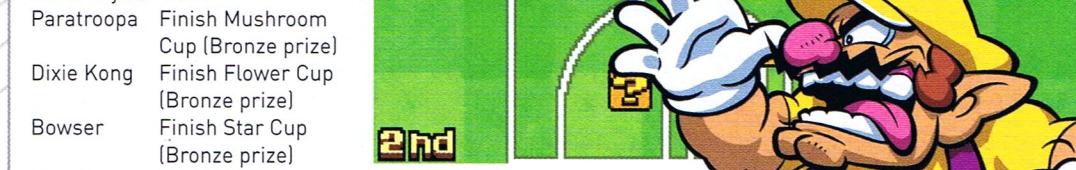
Also, how do I catch Rayquaza after becoming the champ?

Selina M, VIC

It's a tower that's also a mirage... Beyond that, it's a mystery! All you really need to know is that the Mirge Tower is where you can get your hands on a fossil - but you can only see the tower some of the time. To make it past the crumbling floor in side the Mirage Tower, use the Mach Bike. If you ride fast enough, you'll be able to cross the crumbly bits before they cave in.

After the grand battle with Groudon and Kyogre, Rayquaza will retreat to his home on top of the Sky Pillar. It's actually possible to catch the big ol' sky-lizard before you battle the Elite Four but - given that he's at Level 70 - it's probably a good idea to wait until

2nd



To unlock Cactuar, the first thing you need to do is unlock the Desert Stage by scoring more than 800 points in the Star Cup on normal difficulty. Play on the Desert Stage in exhibition mode and sometimes you'll see Cactuar hop out of the sand. When this happens, you just need to win the game to unlock him.

If you're after a new look for your existing team members, here's how to unlock some alternate costumes:

Peach	Finish Mushroom Cup (Silver prize)
Daisy	Finish Flower Cup (Silver prize)
Yoshi	Finish Hard Flower

Flyguy	Cup (Silver prize)
Black Mage	Finish Hard Rainbow Cup (Bronze prize)
Ninja	Finish Hard Rainbow Cup (Silver prize)
White Mage	Finish Hard Rainbow Cup (Gold prize)

afterwards. Make your way to the Sky Pillar (near Pacifidlog Town) and climb up to the top. Make sure you have a strong team of Pokémons with you! A good supply of Ultra Balls or Timer Balls will come in handy, too. Good luck!

**PUPPIES AND PICORI**

Dear *Nintendo Gamer*,

In *Nintendogs*, how many trainer points do I need to unlock the Labrador? I already have 17,211.

Also, in *Zelda: The Minish Cap*, how do you get to Castor Wilds?

Steven

The requirement for unlocking the Labrador depends on which version of the game you have. If you're playing on *Chihuahua and Friends*, you'll need 45,000 trainer points. If you're on *Dachshund and Friends*, you'll need 50,000. Either way, you've got a lot of puppy training to do!

To reach Castor Wilds, you'll need to start from the Trilby highlands. Go down the ladder near where the Deku scrub gave you a bottle earlier in the game. When you're at the bottom of the ladder, charge your sword and step on the glowing panels to make a clone. The two Links will be able to push the big rock on the left out of the way. Make your way towards the left to get through to Castor Wilds.

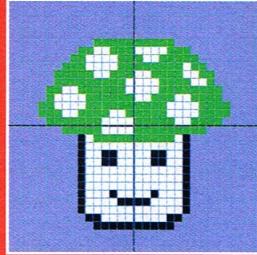
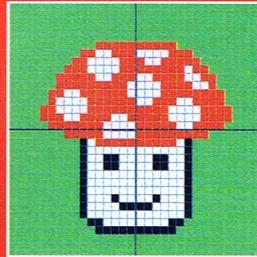
ANIMAL CROSSING CORNER

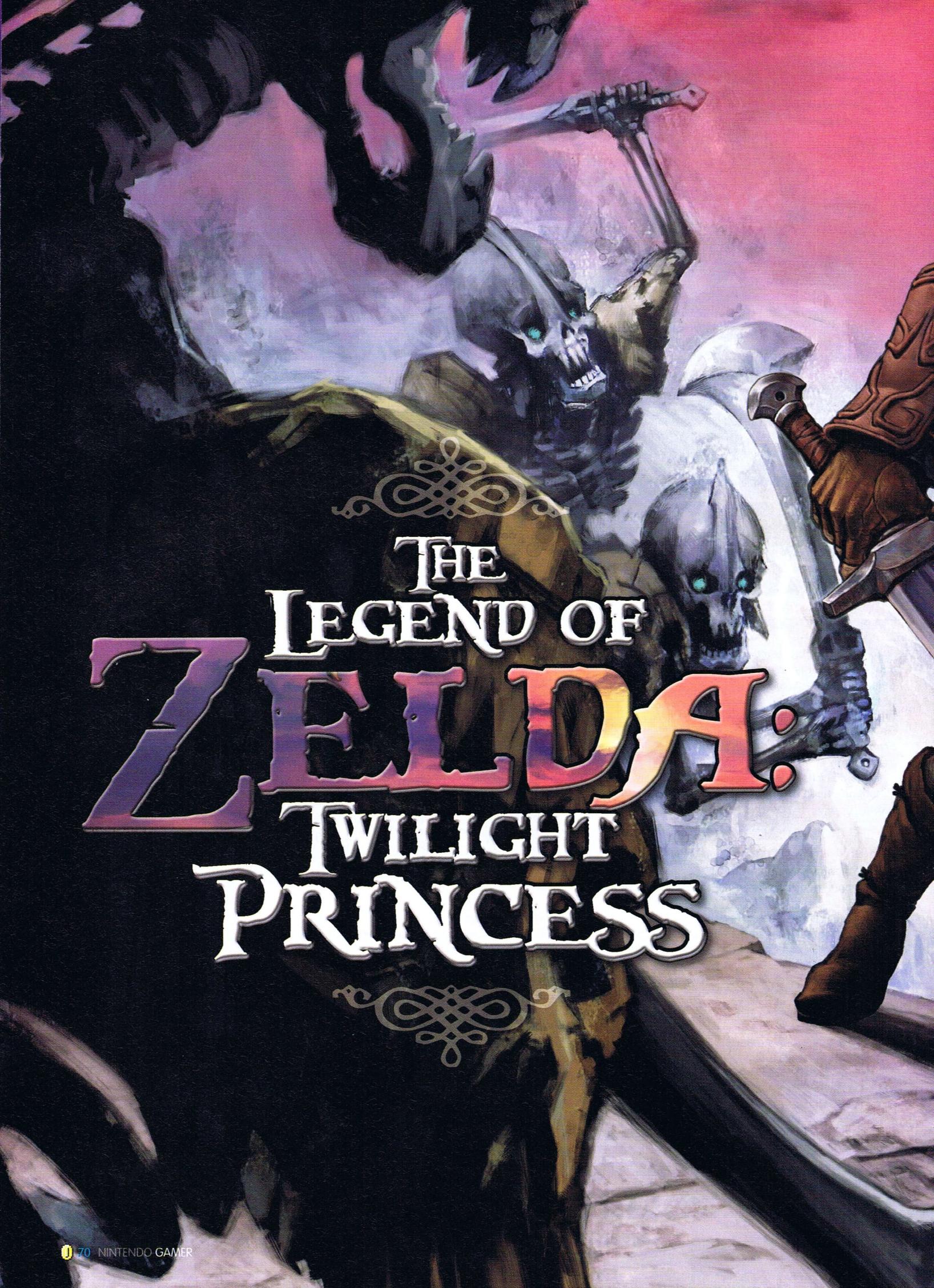
The snow is melting, the days are getting warmer and there's a hint of springtime in the air. You know what that means? It's bug-hunting time! After the quiet winter months, the creepy-crawlies of the *Animal Crossing* world are finally waking up to give bug-catchers a run for their money. Look out for ladybugs, butterflies and honeybees fluttering about the flowers or shake a tree to knock a spider loose from its hiding place. The insects of early spring aren't worth a whole lot of Bells, so money-hungry bug catchers might want to sang a dung beetle or two (800 Bells, found near snowballs) before the winter snows disappear.

Fishermen (and women!) will have their last chance to catch Tuna and Football Fish in the ocean as the weather warms up. From March, the prime catches to look out for are Barred Knifejaw (5,000 Bells) in the ocean and Cherry Salmon (1,000 Bells) in the river. This month's Fishing Tourney will be held on the 25th February from noon until 6pm. Mark that down in your diaries, aspiring anglers!

PATTERNS!!

This month's featured pattern is a chance for fanboys and fangirls everywhere to share the Nintendo love. Yep, it's the classic Mario mushroom! Wear it as a T-shirt, fly it on a flag or creat a mush-room in your house! You can play around with different colour palettes for variations on the mushroom theme. As you can see below, palette 1/16 give the "classic" version of the power-up, while palette 7 upgrades it to a 1-UP!





The background features a dark, atmospheric scene of Link in his white armor fighting Ganondorf. Ganondorf is shown in various stages of his transformation, with multiple heads and skeletal features. A sword is embedded in the ground in front of them. The title is overlaid on this scene.

THE
LEGEND OF
ZELDA:
TWILIGHT
PRINCESS



DUNGEON GUIDE

Firstly, how friggin' awesome is this new *Zelda*? Answer: it's TEH awesomeness! So awesome, in fact, that if we could puree that word it would make awesomesauce. But how tricky are those dungeons eh? It's not shameful to admit that you're a little bit stumped on a particular room or boss. Well, relax because we're here to save the day with our comprehensive Dungeon Guide.

We could have presented a full guide for the game, but then where's the fun in discovering all those beautiful little secrets yourself? Besides, some of you

just wanna fish for sixteen hours [raises hand guiltily] and that's fine too. But when you do come round to passing the game's many dungeons, this guide will be here, waiting for you – unless you've used it for kitty litter or something...

FOREST TEMPLE

Kill all the enemies in the first area and bash at the cage until you free the first monkey. This will be your job, freeing monkeys. Head north and move to the centre of the room, where you'll fight a spider. Light the four torches to raise a platform to the chest containing the Dungeon Map. Head north, watch the funny monkey, then head back into the second room. Head west with the monkey's help and look for Ooccoo in one of the jars here (she helps you warp out). Head north to find a small key and then come back to unlock the door indicated by the monkey. Through here, you need to roll into the pillar to free the second monkey from its cage.

Head back to the second room and go east, where you need to use the exploding spider thingies to kill the plants (pop one in their gaping maws) and free up the entrances to the other monkeys. There's one monkey in the room to the south and one to the east. In the eastern room, roll into the pillars to release a chest containing a small key, and then cross the room carefully (avoiding the creatures beneath the tiles) to light the two torches and gain access to the monkey. Go back and get the fourth monkey to the south, where there's another small key in the plant monster. Head back to the second room and you can finally head north across the gap and into a room where you'll have a small fight.

MINI BOSS - IRATE ORANGUTAN

This one's fairly easy. You need to keep the orangutan Z-targeted as he jumps around the pillars. Then, when he's thrown the boomerang, roll into the pillar he's on to stuff his catch up and make him fall off so you can swipe at him. Then it's simply a matter of rinse and repeat until that lovely Gale Boomerang is in your hands.

THE QUEST CONTINUES...

Use the boomerang on the spinner above the door three times and go left across the



bridges, using your boomerang to change their direction via the spinners. Rescue the fifth monkey by using the boomerang on the spider web. You can also use the boomerang in the second room to get the Compass from the suspended chest in the middle of the room.

Go back to the central room and then through to the room with a gate and four spinners. Target each spinner in the backwards Z shape on the floor and let fly to open the gate and score the Boss Key. Head north from here and use your boomerang to move the walkways and then enter the room where all the monkeys are waiting for you. Go through the eastern door – in here you need to use your boomerang to grab the exploding creature. There's a small key in the plant creature and you can target the bomb and then the rock to blow it up. At the top of the vines, again target the bomb and use it to blow up the last rock and rescue the sixth monkey.

Go back and head east for monkey number seven. In this room, stand on the spider webs and use your lantern to burn them and fall through. Do this on the northern-most one to fall down to the monkey in a cage. Return to the central room. Unlock the western door and at the back of the room go through

the tunnel and climb the vines. The final monkey needs you to use the boomerang on the two spinners and then he's free. Now you can use the monkeys to swing across the chasm and face this dungeon's boss.

BIG BOSS - DIABABA

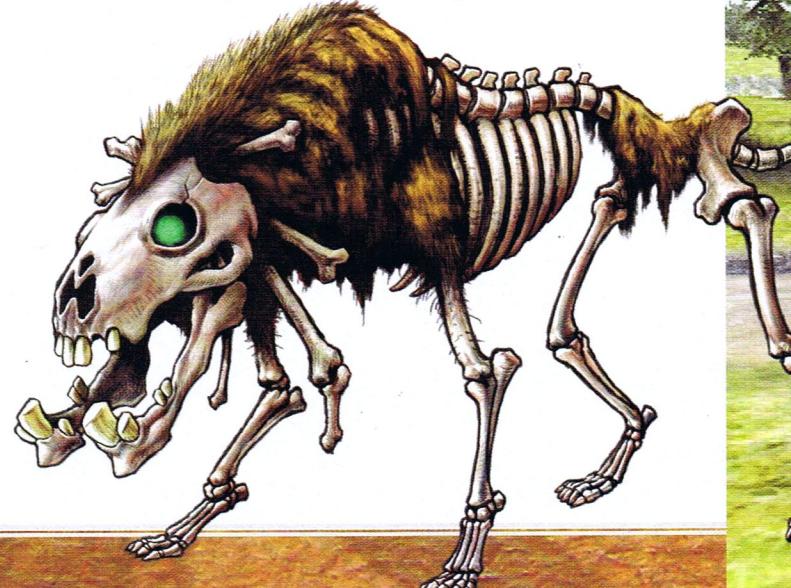
Easy in theory but he can be difficult in practice. Basically, you need to use your gale boomerang to target the bomb-carrying monkey as it passes, then target the plant heads so they swallow the bomb and blow up. Once the two heads are taken care of, a giant head rears its ugly, er, head. Use the same tactic to get him to swallow bombs and then attack the tongue/eye thingy a few times to defeat this nefarious big boss.

GORON MINES

Welcome to hell! Well, close enough. Avoid the lava, then smash the wooden gate with your sword. There's a nearby switch that turns off the flame jets. You need to stand on it and

equip your iron boots to depress it. Run past the flames and climb up the ladder. Jump across the rock pillar, deactivate another flame jet and then at the end of this room jump to the metal panel and use your iron boots to bring the lever down, unlocking the door.

Head to the chest with a small key to the left, jump across the moving platforms and go through the locked door. Kill the crocodile monsters by attacking their tails and then move past the flames to where there's a chain on the ground. Grab it, pull the wall back and then you need to run back and around to the middle section before the wall closes back into place. In the next room, use your iron boots to sink into the water and then step on the switch to activate the magnetic rock which pulls you up to the roof. Walk up and around to the door, behind which is the first Goron Elder. He'll give you a third of the Big Key, so you need to find the other two elders. Grab the Dungeon Map from the chest in this room and then go up the ladder to continue. Ooccoo is in a jar





here also.

Use the iron boots to walk along the walls and stand on the switch to move up to the ceiling. Go around the outer edge of the room, drop to the ledge with the two torches and go through the door. There's another switch in the next room, which makes a moving magnet your goal. Get picked up by it to get to the next highest ledge, activate another switch and use the magnet to reach the northern door. Sink to the bottom of the water, grab the small key from the chest and then swim over to the metal fence. Grab the block and push it aside so you can get past the fence, float up and step on the switch to open a path to the ceiling. Walk along and drop down on the upper level, where there's another switch. This creates a jet stream in mid air; you need to fall off the ledge to be caught in it. Walk along the wall, drop down and hit the crystal to open the gate.

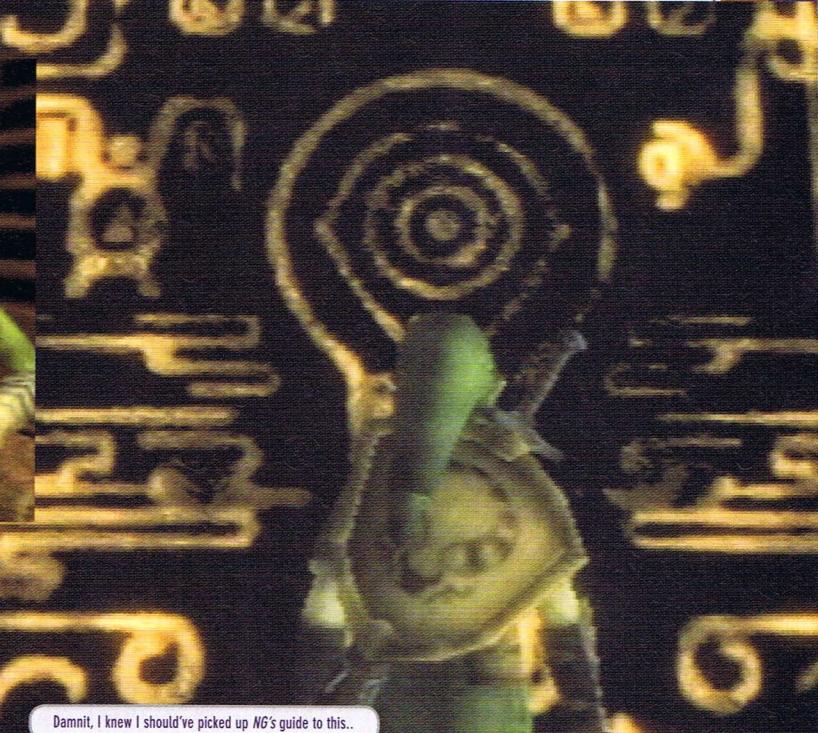
Equip your boots, climb the wall and cut the rope to lower

the gate and then move through the locked door. Kill or ignore the enemies and run right when you can for a chest with a small key. Use it on the western locked door. Here you'll encounter some rotating platforms. Use your boots to hold on and enter the door to greet the second Goron Elder. Move on by climbing the ladder. Again, walk along the wall with your boots and enter the door.

MINI BOSS - GORON GUARD

You need to equip your boots for most of the battle. When the goron raises his arm in preparation for a strike, swipe him with your sword. This will cause him to curl into a ball and roll at you. Time your catch with the A button to throw him over the edge for a rather hot bath. Do this three times to defeat him and you'll be rewarded with the Hero's Bow.

WERE GUARDS...



Damnit, I knew I should've picked up NG's guide to this...

GUARRRRDS

Use the bow to shoot the rope on the platform in front of you and it'll lower. The next room has lots of nice laser eyes that you can now kill with your bow. You can also move the statues around. The Compass is behind the eastern one and the third Goron Elder is in a room to the west. He'll smile vacuously and hand you the final part of the Big Key.

Go back to the room with the statues and pull back the one at the end of the room to continue. In the next room, run into the metal fence to knock it down and jump across the pillars. Be sure to take out all the enemies as they'll stymie you mid-jump. Activate the switch, walk along

the ceiling and find the small alcove with the crystal in it. Hit it with an arrow and go through the door that opens. Shoot the rope to lower the bridge and ride the magnets. Jump across to the northern exit and shoot the crystal to open the gate.

Back in the outdoor area, shoot all the buggers who were shooting you before, go to the right and kill the laser eye and pull the statue back to reveal a door. Go up the ramp and activate the magnet with the switch. You need ride the magnet, shoot the rope above the giant gate, and then jump off when you're above it. Go through, take out the archers and again shoot the rope holding the gate up.

BIG BOSS - FYRUS

Firstly, get some distance from this boss and then fire an arrow at his glowing forehead. This will stun him for a few seconds, enough time for you to run in and grab one of his dangling chains. Equip your boots and walk in the opposite direction. He'll fall down, allowing you to run over and attack his head. Repeat this a few times and this fight, and another heart container, is yours.

LAKEBED TEMPLE

Swim forward, avoiding the sea creatures and then in the main room jump on the golden handle dangling from the roof to open



This is a tricky part: to get past, focus on the boss, not his henchmen.

the door. Equip your bomb arrows and shoot the stalactites in the next area, which makes a jumping path for you. You'll enter the large central room which contains a rotating staircase. Head down the stairs, take a right and then jump out to grab the handle. Drop down onto the stairs and turn right at the top to jump on yet another handle. Before you exit the door on the lower level, check the chest in the corner for the Dungeon Map.

Shoot the two stalactites here, move through the tunnel to the right and across where the water used to be jetting up. On the opposite side of the room, the other rock piece will be going up and down. Jump across it to reach the small key in the chest. Return to the main room, go upstairs and enter the locked door (Ooccoo is in a jar here). Shoot the stalactites with bomb arrows and climb atop the nearest one to reach the vines. Drop onto the top of the wall and jump out to the handle to open the gate. Head through the southern door, past the cog and then through the next door to find another chest with a small key. Retrace your steps a little

and bomb the weakened section of wall. Bomb arrow the bubble monster and go through the locked door.

Drop down and climb the vines, then walk all the way up the spiral ramp. At the top, climb the ladder and jump out to the handle to make a waterslide ride down to the bottom. Once at the bottom, go to the middle and jump to the handle here to release the water into the main chamber. Go back to the cog room, drop down and ride the rotating platforms over to the northern door, where there's another small key in a chest. Ride the rotating platforms again to the other door, enter it and then go through the locked door. At the end of this area there's a blocked passage. Use a water bomb to clear the way.

MINI BOSS - FAT FROGGY

The frog will send a heap of tadpoles at you, which you need to defeat. Then, when he jumps in the air, simply avoid being squashed by watching his shadow. Slash at his tongue and then, when he opens his mouth, fire off a bomb arrow to get another shot at his tongue. Your reward for defeating this boss is the Clawshot.

DR. CLAW

Anything that looks like a target, such as vines, is able to be reached with the clawshot. Return to the central chamber, go upstairs and to the left until you spy a circular clawshot marker

on the roof. Clawshot it to spin the staircase around and make water flow down it. Follow the flow of water to the room with two rotating cogs in it. Clawshot to the front cog, drop down near the chest, clawshot to the vines

you did before and grab the Compass from the chest here. Then go back to the rotating cog room and clawshot your way to the eastern door. Swim down and to the left and through the hole in the wall. Swim up and blow up



above you, climb around the pillar, clawshot to the higher pillar, climb around it and THEN clawshot over to the vines near the door - phew!

Bomb arrow the stalactite above the water stream and get on it. Jump off at the top to land on the other side of the wall. Clawshot to the eastern door, go through and then clawshot the vines on the roof to reach the other side of the fence. Another water spiral room - repeat what

the rock blocking the entrance to the hole. Blow up another rock in the bottom right corner and go through it to find a door. Clawshot to the target on the ceiling and lower yourself through the hole to get to the chest with the Big Key. Go back to the central chamber, make sure both flows of water are filling the chamber and then swim to the large door in the very middle of the area.

BIG BOSS - MORPHEEL

This guy's all hot air. Equip your iron boots and clawshot, then Z-lock the eyeball and nab it whenever you can, swiping it with your sword when it's close. Avoid the bombs he throws out and concentrate on the eye (release Z if you miss it) and after a while Morpheal will opt to swim around instead. Un-equip your boots, swim as fast as you can above him and clawshot the eye atop his head to be pulled in. A few swipes of your sword will turn this monster into sushi.

ARBITERS GROUNDS

Clawshot up to the right and head to the end of the room. Grab the chain with your clawshot to open the gate. Break the wooden gate to the right to find a chest with a small key. Go through the locked





Link's sumo-ed up and ready to rumble...

door and light the two torches to continue. You'll be in a central room where you need to restore the flames by stealing poe spirits. Turn into a wolf, kill the poe and sniff it to learn its scent. Grab the Dungeon Map from one of the chests here and then change back to wolf form and follow the scent to the patch of dirt. Dig it and pull the chain to reveal a staircase.

Go down and push the switch to get the small key from the chest. Look up and clawshot to the room above. Head through the door to the north, kill the poe and go back to the central room. Go to the door above the stairs and enter the locked door. Run across the sand, pull the box back and push it into its recess. Pull the chain back to raise the chandelier and run under it before it falls. Head up the stairs, grab the Compass from the chest and rotate the room to get another small key.

Go through the locked door and follow the poe's trail. There's another patch of dirt with a chain that reveals another poe. Kill it and head north. Grab the small key from the chest, use your senses to get rid of the rats and go through the eastern door. Jump across the chandelier and continue east. Another chandelier, only this time pull it and stand directly beneath it to be able to get over to the eastern door. Bomb the skeleton and in the room with five torches, simply light the first torch in the centre and then the right-most one. Kill the last poe and head back to the central room where

you can now move forward.

Go through the left door, clawshot down and use the central turner to find the small key chest. Make the platform go right to the bottom and enter the locked door. Go wolf and negotiate the spikes and rats, then pull the chain and run around to get past the wall before it closes. Avoid the spinners, grab Ooccoo from one of the jars, go through the door and defeat the skeletons to open the gate. Jump over sand and go through the next door.

MINI BOSS - SWORD DEMON

Damage him enough as a wolf, using your senses, and the ghost will become solid. Change back to human form and fire an arrow at him. He'll do a song and dance so cut him with your sword when he gets close. Eventually he'll die and you'll have access to one of the coolest gadgets ever: the Spinner.

SPIN CITY

Use the spinner on the tracks in the wall and then use it to reach the other side of the sand room. Ride it up the tracks around the room and up to where the large statue is. Then get past the spinning spikes, jumping back and forth with the spinner. Make it to the upper door, go through and grab the Big Key. Ride the grooves in the wall back to the middle of the room and then use the spinner in the floor recess to open the way



onward. Ride up the stairs and jump off to the central cylinder. Use the spinner in the recess to reach the big boss area.

BIG BOSS - STALLORD

We've already told you how to defeat Stallord, in our first issue. Trust us, it's there. Go look... He's not that difficult anyways.

SNOWPEAK RUINS

The first room introduces you to the prevalent element of this dungeon (yeah it's technically a house but we'll call it a dungeon): ice. It's everywhere and will freeze you in place quicker than a large man squeezing your man boobs and demanding that you whistle the national anthem... so best not to let it happen and avoid things that look icy.

Anyway, kill the poe in the first room and nab its soul. Go through the door past the icy patch in the ground. Talk to Yeto's wife and

she'll tell you that the mirror shard is in a particular room, which she marks on your map. She also gives you a map. Pity she later turns out to be a TRANSFORMING DEMON YETI GIRL! But we digress.

Start with the door behind her, which is a kitchen of sorts. Yeto is making yummy soup for his sick wife. If you like, dunk a bottle in and grab some 'simple soup', but it only replenishes two hearts at this stage. Grab Ooccoo from the jar in the back of this room too and then leave the kitchen through the opposite door. There are a couple of ways to work the block puzzle out - you want to get one block to stay in the bottom left corner (from where you entered) so that you can push the other block around and into it and then onto the switch.

Go through the next door and transform into a wolf. Dig beneath the wall to get to the central courtyard. Try and ignore the snow wolves and dig up the buried chest in the centre of this area for a key. Transform into a human and go through the other door.

Avoid or kill the ice sliders here and enter the locked door. Kill all the enemies in the next room to move forward and then in the next room kill the ice skeletons to finally reach the coveted key room. However, all you get is a stinking pumpkin! Take it back to Yeto and he'll add it to his soup, transforming it into 'good soup', which replenishes four hearts.

Go back and talk to the missus, who marks another room on the map and unlocks a door for you to go through. Here, ignore the wolves again and head to the open window at the far end of the courtyard. Climb through and go through the door at the end of this area, where you'll find a cannon ball that needs to be taken all the way to the cannon at the end of a little maze. Go through and kill all the ice sliders and then bring the cannon ball over to the cannon. Pop it in, chuck a bomb in it when it's facing back the way you came and you'll reveal another door.

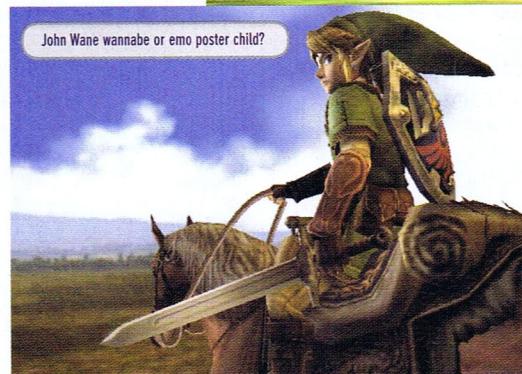
In the next room, don't fall off as you try and reach the chest with the Compass in it. Once you're done, clawshot back to the entrance. Back in the snowy courtyard, use your wolf form and senses to dig up another chest with a key in it – just near the two levers. Open the door nearby and use the cannon ball device to get it out into the courtyard. Grab the ball and walk it or throw it over to the cannon (pesky wolves). Take out the ice monster and continue.

MINI BOSS - BALL-AND-CHAIN WIELDING DUDE

Use your clawshot to get above him and time dropping down with his swings so that you land behind him and can attack his exposed rear end. Keep bashing him like a naughty child and you'll have yourself a brand new toy to play with – the ball and-chain. No, not a wife, an awesome bashing tool that'll come in handy real soon...

DUNGEONING ON...

Now you can smash the crap out of any ice walls you see, and any



enemies for that matter. But first head to the second part of the room and grab the Ordon Goat Cheese and take it back to Yeto. He'll upgrade to 'superb soup' (replenishes eight hearts) and his wife will open yet another door. Smash all the ice here and kill the two monsters in cages (difficult to do without getting frozen). Head north, kill the skeletons and use Z-targeting and your ball-and-chain to get the chandelier to swing. Hop across for the small key in the chest and clawshot back to the locked door. The next few rooms involve more chandelier hopping, until you once again reach the block puzzle.

Smash the ice on the block and the ice covering the central switch and then move the blocks around to cover both switches. It's not too difficult, but does require a fair bit of circular block movement. Once the middle switch is depressed, the door on the second floor is unlocked, which leads to the central courtyard. Clawshot over the broken wall section and head west for more chandelier hopping and a small key. Head south, push some blocks and make it so that you can grab a cannon ball and walk it up to the cannon that rests above the circular walkway. Fire

it up and into the western room, go up there and load it through the next room and finally load it into the outside cannon to take out the nasty ice-breather across from you. Go back down, climb the ladder and enter the room with heaps of pews in it. Kill all the skeletons to gain access to the chest with the Bedroom Key. Mosey on up to the bedroom and prepare to face the final boss.

BIG BOSS - BLIZZETA

Get your ball-and-chain ready and bash her whenever she comes near. After a few hits, the second phase will start. For this part, just run around in circles and watch the reflection on the ice – when a circle starts to form, try and roll out of it, then turn around and ball-and-chain either the protective shards or Blizzeta herself. Repeat three times to defeat her.

TEMPLE OF TIME

To get into the temple, strike your sword into the receptacle to

make a stairway to the entrance appear. In the first room, turn into a wolf and use your senses to discover that a second statue originally stood to the right of the main door. Place something heavy on the switch in front of the empty alcove, climb up to the second level and get reunited with Ooccoo. Light the two torches on the left landing to reveal a chest with a small key in it. Then head upstairs and through the locked door.

In the next room, use a pot on the switch in the middle of the room. Go through the western gate, up the stairs and turn around and destroy the pot to shut one gate and open the one blocking your way. Take all the enemies out – to kill the statue, coax him out and then move to a distance, shooting his vulnerable back when he turns around. A chest containing the Dungeon Map will then appear. Place two objects on the two switches to continue.

In Room 3, take out the laser eye with an arrow and slaughter all the enemies. Move up the



stairs and use the spinner across the gap. Spin the central elevator around to get to the lower level and then kill all the small spiders to make the electrified gate disappear. You then need to bring two heavy objects with you to the upper level – avoid the moving spikes and place them on the switches (do the last one whilst standing on the platform) and then go through to Room 4.

Kill the two statues and raid the chest for a small key. Go back to Room 3 and head through the locked door. Hit the crystal to move the walls around here. You'll find the Compass in a chest here and then you'll head upstairs where there is another diamond.

Negotiate this next part by defeating the enemies as you go and then upstairs to Room 6.

Avoid or kill all of the spiders, go up the stairs and make sure to bring a stone piece with you to make the weight on the large scales even. Continue through the door. In the next room, shoot the laser eye and avoid the spinners. Head up the stairs (always stairs) and take out the monsters. Avoid the sharp obstacles and get a small key from the chest. Grab the stone piece and put it on the switch to turn off the electrified gate. Kill all the enemies to make the gate open up, go through it and then the locked door.



MINI BOSS - ARMoured Guy

Block and attack this behemoth directly after he swings at you. If you can time a dodge jump to the side, you'll get more hits in. Once his armour falls off, hit him with a few more flurries to win. Head over to the chest for the Dominion Rod. Use it on the statue above the chest and guide it to the large bell transporter where it'll be teleported to the previous room.

GRAB YOUR ROD

In the previous room, use the dominion rod on the statue and press B to smash the gate in front of it. Get the statue up one level using the switch on the floor and then pretty much smash everything to bits. Go to where the laser eye is, smash it and then get the statue up to the next transporter.

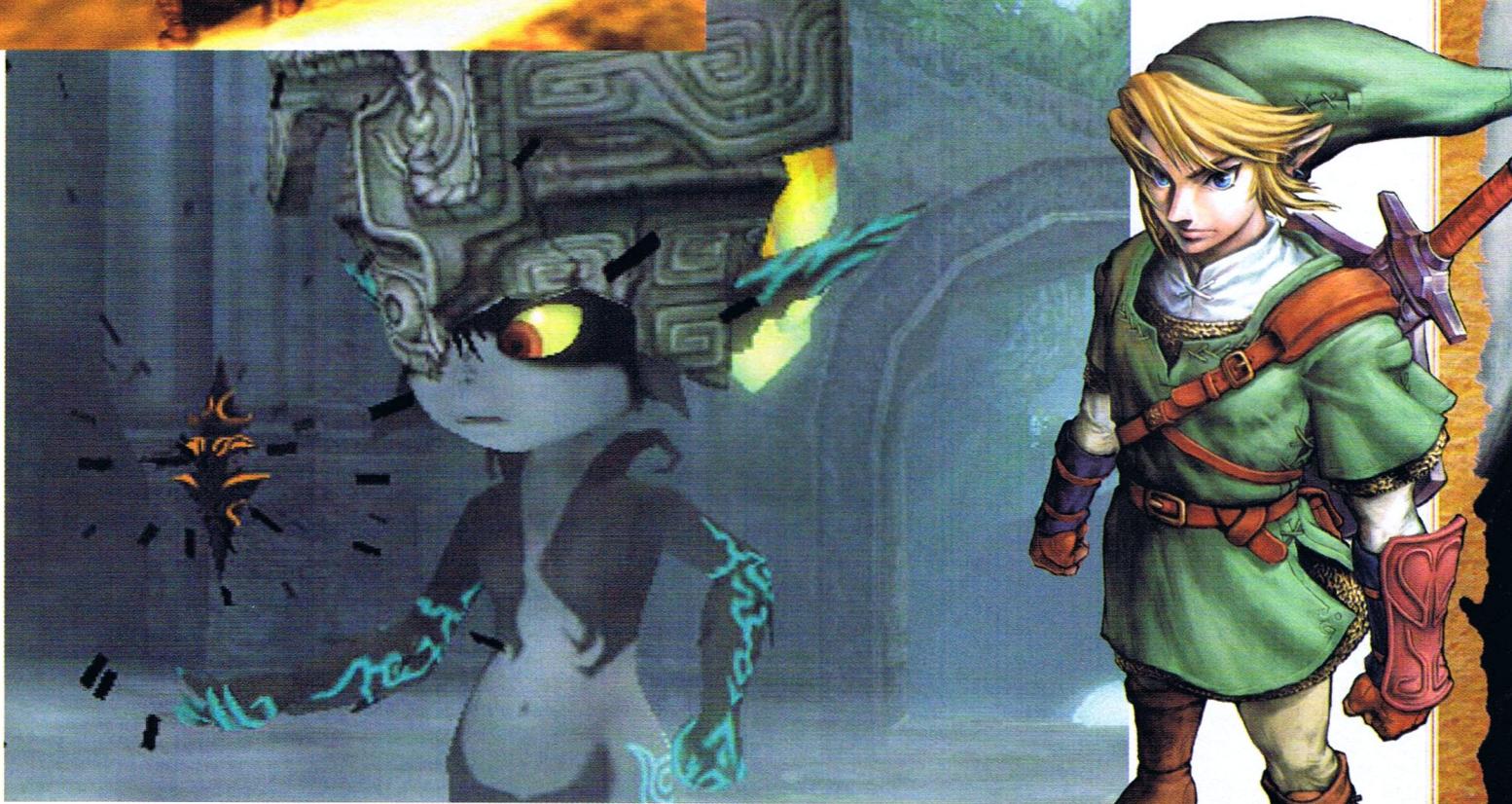
Go back to the scales room, where you'll need a fair bit of weight to even the scales here. Scour the room for stone pieces to help get the statue to the next transporter. Before you leave, you need to get the Boss Key. Put all the weight on the right hand scale platform (looking at it from below) and then climb up from the left one onto the small platform.

Clawshot up to the spot on the roof, use the spinner to go left and onto the upper level. Kill the poe if you wish and go through the door. Kill all the monsters in this room, clawshot up and place the two stone pieces and the two monster shells on the four switched to gain access to the Big Key chest. Backtrack to where the statue is.

Negotiating the moving walls here is tricky but not impossible. Get the statue to the transporter and move to the next room. Move the central elevator to the third level and get the statue on board. Bring it down to ground level and then over to the transporter. Clawshot over the gate, take out all the enemies and get to the final room (via transporter for the statue of course). Finally, place the statue in its alcove, go through the door and negotiate the gauntlet to reach the Big Boss door. Use the dominion rod on the stone piece while it's on the switch to open the gates at the end of this room.

BIG BOSS - ARMOGOHMA

Go to the centre of the chamber and follow the spider on the roof with a nocked arrow. Fire at the eye, rush to the nearest statue and then use the dominion rod on it to smash the spider. Armogohma will then



spew a heap of small spiders out – do a spin attack to get most or all of them. Smash the spider three times and then, when the spider is just an eye surrounded by small spiders, take it out easily with a bomb arrow.

CITY IN THE SKY

First of all, head west to the shop and get Ooccoo Jr. You'll also need to equip your iron boots throughout this place in order to walk against the wind. Head north, send an arrow into the diamond above the door to open the gate and go through the door. Grab an ooccoo and fly across the gap. Clawshot the pillar with vines and use another ooccoo to head over to the door.

In the next room, head left and use your spinner in the floor recess on the left side of the balcony to extend a bridge. Go back inside, clawshot to the right-most window and walk through the hole to go outside. Jump down and use the spinner in the floor recess for another bridge. Clawshot to the vines, climb up and cross the bridge. Clawshot the right ceiling target, drop down and grab the small key in the chest. Go back to the other bridge you extended and go through the locked door.

Head left, strike the crystal in the centre of the room, cross the fans on the right using your boots and clawshot to the vine-covered pillar. Go through the western door to get the Dungeon Map, then back through the southern door. Kill the two enemies, clawshot the vines above you and then clawshot the hanging sphere to turn the fan on. Grab an ooccoo and ride the



wind gust up to the door. Get to the bottom of this tall area, go through the door and clawshot the sphere with your iron boots equipped to stop the fan. Drop through for a nice little fight.

MINI BOSS - FLYING DRAGON

Clawshot his shield to drag him over and then wail on him with some awesome moves. Do this a few times and you'll be rewarded with another clawshot, giving you the Double Clawshot.

GOT WIND?

Use the double clawshot to get back up via the fan hole in the roof. In the next tall corridor, double clawshot (DC) until you can dangle from another sphere, then immediately press down and target through the open gates to get through to the next area.



DC as quick as you can across the moving columns, grab the Compass from the chest and go through the door. DC underneath the bridge, then onto the vines and climb up. You're back at the start.

Go out the eastern door and use the hovering plants to cross the broken bridge. Enter the next room, drop down and DC across. Negotiate this fairly complicated maze using the DC and then enter the next door you come to. Kill the large flower (a bomb to finish him off) and make your way up the room using the DC. Get to the central walkway and enter the next room.

Use the hovering plants to jump over the walls (raise and lower to get through some of them) and exit. Again, use the plants to get across this gaping expanse. Enter the garden area with the main fan building in the centre. Turn right, clawshot up the vines and transform into a wolf to walk across each rope. Go through

the upper door, past the rotating blades and clawshot the sphere above the chest to turn the fan off. Get the Big Key from the chest, drop down a level and clawshot the ceiling grate, lowering yourself until you see another sphere to the north – clawshot to it and equip your boots to turn the outside fan on. Exit the northern door, DC across each panel out here. In the next area, kill both of the flying dragons, clawshot the grate above the door and then onto the panel. Clawshot the diamond sitting in the wall recess opposite you to get things moving and work your way up to the big boss room.

BIG BOSS - ARGOROK

Make sure you have your iron boots equipped, then clawshot up the side panels and when Argorok comes near clawshot over to him. You'll drag him down and smash his armour. The second phase sees rain start to fall and flying plants

rise into the air. You need to clawshot up high enough to reach them. Then, when Argorok breathes fire, Z-target and clawshot along to avoid the flame. When he stops, keep going until you're behind him, then manually target the soft spot on his back. Clawshot over and give him what for. As usual, do this three times and this monster has been served. Just be careful the third time as he breathes fire twice, in different directions.

PALACE OF TWILIGHT

Head to the right hand entrance and kill the enemies in here to get a small key. Clawshot up and go through the locked door. Walk into the fog to be turned into a wolf, use your senses and kill the Zant head. Two chests appear; the compass is in the closest one and a small key in the other. Go through the locked door.

You'll face off against ghost Zant here. Try and ignore the enemies and just attack him whenever he appears. When he's gone, strike the hand holding the glowing Sol sphere and place it in the central floor receptacle. Go up the stairs that appear and clawshot the Sol up to you. Retreat through the rooms using similar tactics and then return all the outside denizens to normal as you head over and put the Sol in one of the two receptacles.

Get on the platform that appears and head west. In the next room, clawshot to the platforms, jump across and kill the Zant head for a key. Kill all the enemies in the next room and another key will appear. The Dungeon Map is in one of the blue chests in a side alcove here. Head through for another Zant battle and yet more frustrating Sol juggling (just keep at it).

Place the second Sol in the outside area and receive the light-filled Master Sword, which can now cut through dark fog. Proceed up the central walkway, do a spin attack to clear the fog and jump across. In the first room, clear the fog and place both Sols in the floor receptacles. Go up the stairs, hit the globe and ride on the platform. Kill all the Zant heads for a small key, hit the three globes, ride the platform and go through the locked door.

Again, kill all the Zant heads in the outdoor area for another

small key (strike the globes and ride the platforms that appear). Clear the fog here and clawshot up for the Big Key and then go through the locked door. Clear the fog and attack the globes and then use a bit of trial and error to get to the platforms above. Defeat the Zant heads and grab the resulting small key. Jump on the nearest platform and go through the locked door. Clear the fog, kill all the enemies and go through the door to fight Zant.

BIG BOSS - ZANT

Zant takes several forms during this fight, but he's pretty easy if you know what you're doing. For the first fight, keep blocking, Z-target Zant and throw your boomerang at him, then hit him as he hops onto land. Fight two: equip your iron boots, block his magical attacks and then roll over and attack him while he regains some breath.

Fight three is underwater, so equip your Zora armour. When Zant appears in the first statue, clawshot him to drag him over and attack him. When multiple pillars come out of the sand, look for the one that opens, clawshot him and nail his arse. The fourth fight is reminiscent of the orangutan fight. Roll into

the pillar that he's on twice and swipe him when he's on the ground.

Fight five requires the ball-and-chain, so get it ready, avoid the giant Zant, turn around and hit one of his legs. He'll grow smaller and hop around, allowing you to follow and hit him. The final fight is probably the easiest. Simply block and attack and then when he does his whirlwind move, wait for him to get breathless and finish him off.

GANONDORF

After exploring Hyrule Castle, you'll come to the final battle for the game. And what Zelda game would be complete without uber villain Ganon? This is another multi-part battle, so make sure you've stocked up on hearts, fairies and all that good stuff.

First up, he'll do the cowardly thing and take control of Zelda. You can't hurt her except to turn her attacks back; the energy attack is the only one that can be reflected. You need to slash at it with your sword to send it back, but don't do this from too far away as she'll just send it on back to you.

Ganon then changes into a large beast. You need to be

careful not to be hit as you target the glowing spot on its forehead with an arrow. When it flips over, attack its exposed stomach. When you can no longer get a shot in (he'll teleport), switch to wolf form, watch for him to teleport towards you and use the A button to grab him and throw him to the ground. Attack his belly again.

For the next phase, you're on horseback. You need to chase Ganon and get close enough so that Zelda can fire her light arrows and hit him. She'll miss a bit but she has unlimited ammo. Avoid the enemies he summons, stay close and when he's been hit enough he'll slow down, allowing you to get a few hits in with your sword. Repeat this enough to be taken to the final showdown.

The final part of the battle is a duel. Ganon's a big, wieldy mongrel who will hurt you if he connects, so keep rolling around and using the back slice maneuver. Stick in there and eventually he'll go down on one knee and then, at last, will fall onto his back. Take that opening to deliver the killing blow with the A button. Then sit back, light a cigar and call over those hot chicks to sit on your lap – you've just finished possibly the best Zelda game ever!



Nintendo Gamer INBOX



NICE PLEASANT TYPE

Firstly, I would like to thank you for bringing this magazine out in the first place! I've been desperately wanting a magazine specifically or Nintendo, but the only ones that I could find were sold only in America, which is no good to me - unless of course I want to ship them over for a lot of money! And it's not only a Nintendo magazine (yay!), but it's also a very good one. I bought it this morning and have read it cover to cover already! I can't wait for the next edition. Could I just say that I love the idea of the Wiimote-man and that I WANT ONE OF THOSE COSTUMES TO WEAR TO THE NEXT SCHOOL SOCIAL!!! The only down side however, was that in the "exert-o-meter," for *Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam*, you wrote exactly the same thing as you did for *Red Steel*. Is this a mistake, or is there really an element of sword-play in the skateboard-racing-wii-game? Also for "Dr. Kawishama's Kwik Kwiz", I absolutely SCOURED page 81 searching for the results, but I still didn't find them. Call me crazy, but could you please explain to me exactly where they are?

Anyway, keep up the good work :)
Em

Yes! That was a mistake. Ouch. Well spotted though! For the record, it should have read "Minor flicks of the wrists are all that's required."

As for the answers to Dr K's Kwik Kwiz – they're there! Just underneath the entry for 24th Golden Bug – the Female Dragonfly – in the brown space. Trouble is, it was written in invisible ink and we forgot to include the invisible ink reader on the front cover. Doh! You'll find the answers on page 9, and from now on we'll stick with regular ink.

NINTENDO=INNOVATION

The Wii has no doubt upped the ante in terms of the ongoing 'Console Wars' in a unique way. The Wii has definitely changed the face of console gaming forever. This got me thinking. Who else can make something similar without being labelled copycats and who else can think of another fresh idea that is as good as the Wii is? The next step might be towards greater interactivity, but still, I can't see the Wii ever dying as a console. I mean, I could see myself playing this console regularly for decades (as long as new titles keep on coming).



*Please stop sending us questions about *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*. We know you want it – we want it really badly too! As soon as we hear anything worthwhile about it we'll run at the front of the mag in our news section. We promise!*

What do you guys think, could this be Nintendo's longest surviving console or even the longest surviving console of all time?

Michael S

The real question is whether or not the Wii's control scheme has been accepted positively by the masses to ensure it becomes part of the console gaming landscape. We think it has indeed, and would be very surprised if we're not controlling games using realistic gestures in the decades to come.

rumble features being emulated by Sony here? I am all for innovation in gaming (clearly because I am a huge supporter of the Wii, despite not owning one yet) but I have to question whether this game would even be in development where it not for the success of Nintendo's fantastic new console.

Troy Hulm

We think it's the other way around – the PS3 features accelerometers in its controller so games (like *Lair*) are being designed to make use of the motion-based controls on offer.

Irrespective of whether Sony added motion control after the Wii's unveiling or not (we strongly suspect it was a reactionary thing – we're sure Sony could have managed to get motion control AND rumble into the SIXAXIS controller if they had more than few months to work on it), motion control seems to have been accepted by gamers and so will undoubtedly become a permanent part of the gaming landscape.

Nintendo's innovation should be applauded. And in Sony's case – don't they say imitation is the most sincere form of flattery?



The Sims creator Will Wright's innovative new game – the PC only *Spore* – has just been announced for DS. We'll have more on it next issue...

CONTACT US

We want to hear what you have to say. So, write to Nintendo Gamer!

Snail:
Nintendo Gamer
78 Renwick Street
Redfern, NSW 2016
Australia

Email:
nintendogamer@next.com.au

GAME & WATCH

I used to read the old N64 Gamer magazine back in the day. I certainly hope this new magazine does well.

I have been a gamer since the Game & Watch era, and have always had Nintendo products. I never owned a GameCube due to the constant delays in its release. I purchased a PS2 instead, but after playing my brother-in-law's Wii, I knew I wouldn't be getting a PS3 and would become a Wii-tard instead.

I am wondering about the connectivity between DS Lite and Wii. I know this was possible with GameCube and GBA, but was it utilised in a positive way, or was it merely a novelty. Is there any news on how the DS Lite will work with Wii, and is it worth my money.

I loved the old Game & Watch games (I still have my first one, and it still works too) but after getting a NES, I lost interest in handheld gaming. I would rather spend my money on Wii games than a DS, unless the DS/Wii connectivity is something worth paying for.

Keep up the good work,
Rocket

The DS can indeed communicate wirelessly with the Wii and the first serve of this console connectivity should be Pokémon Battle Revolution for Wii when it launches some time later this year. The DS will serve as a personal display device and allow you to control the game instead of the Wii remote as well. Given the personal nature of the DS' screens (how many times do you see people crowding around to watch someone play DS?), this function is best used to keep game movements secret from other players in the same room. Other titles like Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles will offer similar features.

The thing is, while the Wii to DS connectivity certainly enhances games, the vast majority of games using this function are just as enjoyable without it.

Your lack of interest in handheld gaming aside, we'd have no hesitation recommending the purchase of a DS. Things have changed a lot since Game & Watch and even GameBoy days, and the number of quality of games available for the DS is truly impressive. We here at Nintendo Gamer all put more time into our DSes than we do the Wii (although we like both equally).

So the short answer is: no, there's no killer app for the Wii-to-DS connectivity function yet. That said you won't be disappointed with a DS as a console in its own right, and you'll be able to utilise the connectivity features to boot.

GBA WORLD MK III

I've been reading your mags ever since GBA World! I think the Wii is awesome. I have Wii Sports (obviously), Wii Play, and the absolutely stunning Twilight Princess.

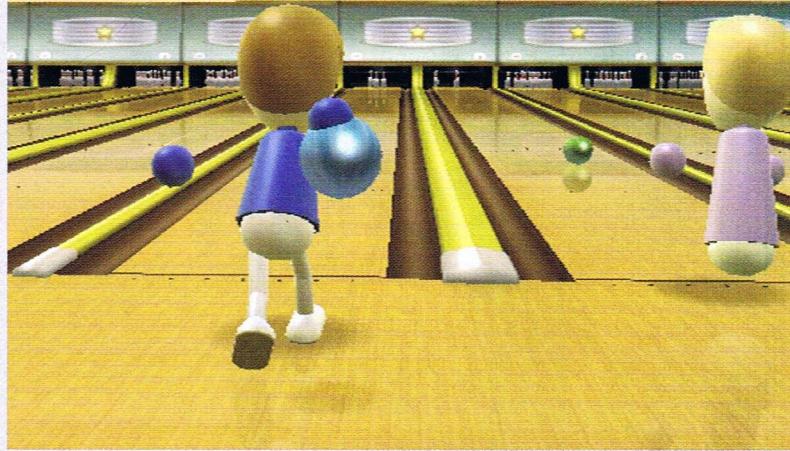
Anyhoo, I have a few questions to ask.

1. What is the release date for Super Smash Bros. Brawl?
2. What are the controls for Brawl?
3. What do you recommend I should get for virtual console? (I'm thinking I should get Super Mario RPG.)
4. Dan can be a weiner. Why are you so cruel in reviews, Dan? Thanks, guys.

Jace 'BlackMage' VK

Ahh, our disguise hasn't worked. Right – to the answers, then!

1. There is no release date for Super Smash Bros. Brawl. It'll be out when it's done. March says before the end of the year



We got a lot of correspondence about March's *Wii Sports* bowling score. He now realises he sucks at bowling and decided to beat Tiger Woods at his own game.

but Dan's calling 2008. We shall see.

2. What, you mean besides the "A" button being for the primary attack and the D-pad/thumbstick being used to move your character around? We don't know. However lacking any motion controls a GameCube controller can apparently be used for a more classic experience (as an alternative to the Wii remote and nunchuk combo).

3. Hey, go for it. If you can get Super Mario RPG on the VC then please, SHOW US HOW. That one's up there with Chrono Trigger and Final Fantasy III (or FFVI if you want to be accurate) as our most wanted VC games. Those and Super Metroid, it must be said. As for currently available games, any or all of Super Mario 64, Mario Kart 64, Donkey Kong Country or Super Castlevania IV should please.
4. Cruel? He's just keeping it real, yo.

magazine since issue #2 of Total Gamer and I love it even more now that you are only covering Nintendo stuff. I also love the humour.

I have some questions that I hope you can answer:

1. Can you recommend any good RPGs on the DS that are coming out around February that I should purchase, and how much will they cost?
2. Are you guys going to do a design-a-game page anytime soon?

Yours truly,
Geoff Kahl.

Sure.

1. At this stage, Spectrobes is shaping up to be pretty nice, although you'll have to wait until March to get your hands on it. Final Fantasy III should also be due soon. We wish we could say Legend of Zelda Phantom Hourglass or Final Fantasy IV (it's actually a GBA game, but you know, you can play it on your DS), but we can't because they're not due until much later this year.

2. Not soon, if at all. It's possible though.

TOTAL GAMER MK II

I have been collecting your

Everybody Hates Mario

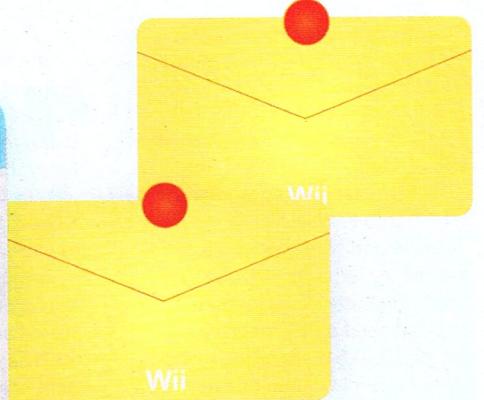
BY PATRICK ALEXANDER



Preview

THE SIMS (WII)

The Sims is coming to Wii and it looks like it could give *Animal Crossing* a run for its money. We take a look at how this Japanese developed version of one of the world's most popular games is shaping up.



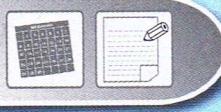
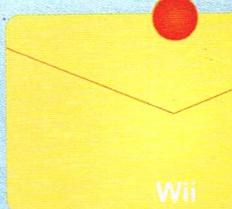
Reviews

We also review:

- Kirby Squeak Squad (DS)
- Wing Island (Wii)
- Final Fantasy III (DS)



- Spectrobes (DS)
- Diddy Kong Racing DS (DS)
- Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney (DS)



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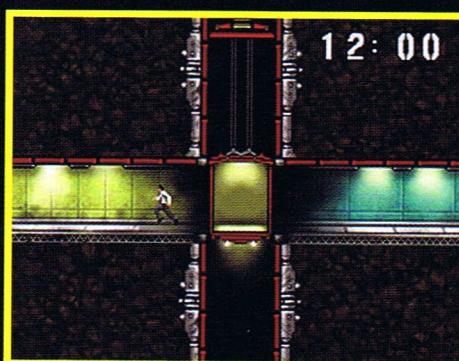
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